

SELF-AWARENESS: COMMUNALLY EXPLORING BEHAVIOR
IMPACTED BY TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES
IN A VULNERABLE SPACE

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A FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
THE DOCTORAL STUDIES COMMITTEE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Dayton, Ohio
December 2020

**United Theological Seminary
Dayton, OH**

**Faculty Approval Page
Doctor of Ministry Final Project**

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ABSTRACT

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The context is the Baptist Association in Atlanta, Georgia. Negative behavior plaque our churches. Unawareness has haunted God's people for centuries and the church remains ignorant to her poisonous aroma. Members have been traumatized and unknowingly created defense mechanisms for their protection. The problem is the church remains unaware of the traumatic events that congregationalist experienced and is playing out in the church and is traumatizing all who enters. The hypothesis is that through education on trauma and spiritual care healing practices, this ministry project on self-awareness will encourage participants to become aware of experiences that influence their own behavior.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank God for allowing me to take this journey to academic promise. I certainly would like to honor Drs. Thomas Francis and Harold Hudson who were the guardians of the gateway to United Theological Seminary. I am grateful for my mentors and Faculty advisors. Dr. Thomas L. Francis fought for me when I did not know how to fight for myself. Dr. Sharon Ellis Davis was a mother figure and academic encourager. Dr. Jerome Stevenson help me to face my greatest fear, self. I acknowledge the Pastoral Care and Counseling Cohort 2017- 2021, your chants of support and love has kept me in the fight for academic success. The entire UTS family has aided me with love, comfort, and fellowship.

I could not have done this without the support of Wellstar Health Systems, Wellstar North Fulton, Spiritual Health, Jason Lesandrini, Renee L. Owen, Jon Paul, Dr. Karim Godamunne, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc., and Foundation Lodge #592. There are so many that have poured into me I wish I could name them all. A special recognition to New Mountain Top Baptist Church who kept us when no one else would, Thank you.

I would like to also acknowledge the following who helped me get to school and do my project: Dr. Kimberly Davis, Jeffrey Gladney, Dr. Otis Moss III, Dr. Clarence Massie, Dr. Alvin Sutherland, ShaKeta Robinson Bruce, William Hemphill, Dr. Johnny Flakes III, Dr. Amos Williams, Dr. Markesha Henderson, Dr. Johnny Flakes III, Dr. Kristy Christopher Holloway and Sons of the Bishop, The YBC and Marques Fletcher so many other family, friends and teammates. I will always be grateful for my mother and

father in law, Albert and Sharon Chisholm who always believed in my promise. To my editor who gave me the words of life that has caused my life in writing to blossom, Dr. Lori. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my new family Crown of Life Community Baptist Church. Thank you for all your prayers, support, words of encouragement and understanding.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my parents, David A. Spencer Sr. and Christine Spencer who always spoke life in me and my education. They poured into me all my life and everything that I have accomplished has been because they have instilled it in me since I was a baby. As my mother rest in peace, Mother Pearl, has waged spiritual warfare on my mother's behalf and I am glad to call her mother. Thank you Pops for being a listening ear, mentor, and pastor. I love you so much. Thank you for teaching me manhood.

I also dedicate this body of work to the ones that I can never repay for times lost, my children Trinity Grace and David III. Thank you so much for being so understanding and patient with me as I went through this process. It could not be easy watching me leave for days on end for a few years. I love you so much and I look forward to seeing this working out in your favor.

Finally, I dedicate this to my bride, and friend Cha'Ke'Sha Shani Spencer who is currently in school. You, more than anyone else, have seen the good, bad, and the ugly. For years, you have admonished me to get therapy and uncover the deep-rooted pain that plagued my life for so long. You were there when I was not my best, but my worst and you still waited for me. It was you that suffered through as I battled with God after my mother died. It was you that held me when I could not stop crying when I thought God gave up on me. It was you Babe who has been the one constant in my life. I am forever

grateful. I love you so much. I dedicate all my work here and future work to God and you. I could not have done this work without you. Love you forever, David Anthony Spencer, Jr.

INTRODUCTION

Healing is not impossible for the church. Becoming self-aware of the traumatic experiences in our lives and how they inform our negative behavior is a step toward freedom. Exploring biblical connections, I realized Saul and I have a lot in common. For so long I have lived my life unaware of the hurt and pain in my own life. I have operated in ways that has become oppressive in one way or another. Saul was oppressive. He set out to persecute and kill Christians all for the glory of himself. He was determined to satisfy the lust of flesh and pain so that he could satisfy something within that could never be embraced until he recognized and identified hurt.

When Saul lost his sight, Jesus instructed him to go to Damascus and stay in the house of Judas. He was guided by his companions. The companions did not possess the hatred for the children of God that Saul did, because they did not even fight or debate where to take him. As Saul was there, he had an opportunity to reflect on what was happening in his life. Saul was operating in spiritual darkness and was headed toward destruction. I too remember what it is like to lose my sight. Saul was without sight, food, or drink for three days. It is as if he was died. To not eat or drink for many is like being dead because one is not getting nourishment. All of Saul's life he had been operating in darkness and now he seen a light that blinded him for three days.

Ananias came to the street called straight where Saul was located. A street that metaphorically spoke to what happened to Saul, he was made straight spiritually. Ananias

touched his eyes and the text said that scale-like substance came off of his eye and his sight was restored. Searching for the word scale refers to fish-like scales. The fish-like scales speak to the poser of God. The road that Saul was on was not near a lake or river but it was dry land; nevertheless, a fish like scale covered his eyes after seeing a bright light.

In reflection, I wondered why fish scales would be used to cover Saul's eyes. I was led to conclude that God used the fish scales to cover his eyes to protect Saul from seeing God's glory (Ex. 33:20). God was protecting Saul. I also believe that the companions were not close. Saul had his own agenda and motivation. I believe that Saul was too far ahead and that would explain the reason why the companions did not hear God. I do not pretend that I know the exact reason, this is the explanation that was revealed unto me.

In chapter one, we learn that Saul was troubled by the inner struggle. First, he battled with his own insecurities as a result people experienced Saul's deflection. Secondly, he struggled with his need to please and win the hearts of others which speaks to Saul's dependence. Finally, we witnessed Saul's delusion of the will of God. In the closing of this text, Saul gained his eyesight and he also gained several other things. First, God accepted him into the family and gave him purpose and a new purpose on life.

Secondly, he was resurrected as a new person, similarly to one who has been baptized, which he physically played out after he ate and gained strength. Finally, he was accepted by God and those that dwelled in Damascus as he stayed several days with other Christians. The text no longer speaks of the remaining companions. The blessing is that when God is allowed to operate in our lives, we no longer have to walk in darkness due

to lack of self-awareness. God will reveal all unto us as he did with Saul which was how he was able to realize that he was persecuting the wrong people. Lack of self-awareness brings about negative and oppressive behavior. There is a danger in being blind to our own internal issues. A lack of self-awareness can destroy us, physically, emotionally and spiritually. If we decide to remain ignorant to our inner struggles we will remain in bondage by the prince of darkness. I believe that it is in these periods of darkness that allows his light to show so that we can choose a different path beyond the one we are headed down when we function on the negative images and ideas in our minds and hearts.

In chapter two, we turn on the historical lens and view how the lack of self-awareness can bring about an onslaught of unhealthy behavior among those that experience this oppressor-like attitude and practice. Carl Jung said, “The healthy man does not torture others. Generally, it is the tortured who turn into torturers.”¹ The aim of this research was to explore the history of oppression and how it has caused a flood of unhealthy behavior to be exhibited in the history of the Baptist church. The lack of self-awareness has proven to be the pathway that oppression has traveled through the course of the centuries.

The first objective was to show how oppression has existed in the life of the Baptist church. Based on findings, we discovered that the Baptist church was established upon the precipice of opposition. Baptist has known oppression since the beginning of establishment. The second objective was to examine the history of the black church and seek out examples of unhealthy behavior. I discovered that the history of oppression was

¹ "Criminal Minds, Season 1," Quotes.net, accessed October 17, 2020, <https://www.quotes.net/show-quote/18321>.

passed on through the Baptist tradition. Oppression through slavery, worship and faith praxis and initial beginnings the black Baptist church. Literature does point out that in all the history of the Baptist church there are some spaces of uncertainty. The focus was more about living out faith and operating in a personal relationship with God.

The final objective was to investigate how the women in the black Baptist church was and continues to be oppressed by the members of the congregation. Unhealthy behavior did not just begin since the beginning of the black Baptist church, but it was how the Baptist church began. Unhealthy behavior and the lack of self-awareness are co-laborers in the oppression and mental and emotional destruction of others. The oppression conducted by others were only expressions learned from past experiences. As a result, unhealthy behavior continues to be paramount to the life in the Baptist church.

The Suffrage Movement was used in this research to compare and help give clarity as to how men viewed women in our society. Throughout the literature, we discovered that much of the Woman's Suffrage Movement literature was limiting in relation to African American women and African American women in the church. The lack of inclusion of African American women and the church supports how white women only focused on them gaining equality. Statistics shared by Lincoln and Mamiya gave clarity to the reasoning behind why individuals did not support women in ministry or pastoring a church.

For years, I have believed that women have not supported women in ministry because they did not believe in women in leadership. Until I discovered that women were only going according to what was taught to them from slave masters and other persons in leadership operating out of the old state of oppressive affairs. These unhealthy

and oppressive acts have only traumatized individuals and as a result they have traumatized others. If the Baptist church does not recognize her own pain, we will continue to destroy one another. We must address our hurt and face our oppressors, in that, our trauma does not guide our actions and thoughts ultimately defeating trauma and managing its long term affects. Philosopher Kahlil Gibran penned “Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars.”² In order to understand the nature and lasting effects of being traumatized by unhealthy behavior and oppression, one must explore trauma and its impact. I would like to believe that if persons understood the full gravity of trauma caused by the lack of self-awareness and unhealthy behavior healing can take place within individuals, the Baptist church and the community.

Chapter three displays how theologically, those who choose to operate in limitations will find it complicated to find meaning. Without exploring what it means to have a limited mindset and experience, we will remain in the sandstorms of hatred and inequality. Unlimited mindsets and experiences lead us to discord in community and the church. Presently, we fight over who has been called and chosen for such a time like this. It takes a community to make a difference in the world. One group, one race and interest group can solve the challenges of the world by themselves it will take the collective. As a society, we must see the whole pie. One sect of people cannot see all the dimensions to one problem.

My research aim was to explore womanist theology and its connection to the need to become aware of the traumatic events that has helped to shape us and our role in the

² "Criminal Minds, Season 1," Quotes.net, accessed October 17, 2020, <https://www.quotes.net/show-quote/18321>.

world. Negative behavior is believed to be the reason that drives wedge between us all. This negative behavior is only the result of some form of oppression experienced by someone in our lives that later became unaware.

In my research, we discovered that faith has been misused and abused with the whip of racism, the baton of classicism and water hoses of silence. All are weapons of choice with the intent to destroy, discourage, and keep under the sheets of oppression. Theologies that inform us pertaining to my project consist of narrative, liberative and silence. The main one is womanist theology. Womanist theology has influenced me to proclaim it for myself. Womanist theology is the most forgiving of them all. It instructs us to forgive all those that seek and work to keep us under the hand of injustice. Womanist theology not only forgives but it carries all those that have rejected them publicly and privately. Deciding on which theology spoke most to my project was difficult. Silence, narrative and liberation theology can fit perfectly; however, these theologies are limiting and exclusive. Womanist theology is about a group of people that have been excluded by everyone and yet they still want to forgive and include everyone, no matter how they have been treated.

As a result of this exclusion, many have been divided. Our negative behavior distances us from everyone. It forces us to live in the dark places of our lives and community. It prevents us from thinking beyond just what we know. This exclusion, negative behavior restricts us from living a limitless life with everyone else including ourselves. In reflection, I have experienced that life. For so long I was unaware of my rejection and shame. My unawareness had me living in a cell of discontent and unhappiness. Frozen in time with unresolved pain nailing me to the floor of discontent.

This unawareness, like Saul, separated me from the ones that love and loved me. Discord continued to overtake me, my mind and all my perceptions. My family became a victim of my unresolved and unconscious rejection.

In chapter four, it took me recognizing the need to identify the problem that I once avoided and denied that was present. The theoretical framework of womanist theology leads us to be inclusive in our thoughts and language. It also influences us to embrace who we are and who we become because of our experiences. This work becomes important to us because it leads us down the road to community and collaboration. Academically, this work will push us to do further research on how far we have come over time in relationship to our connection with one another. As a community this work challenges us to examine how we are treating one another in the faith and within our own ethnic community. Research has confirmed that there is a consistency in the negative behavior due to the unawareness of others. Saul continued to struggle with this reality. He was under the impression that he had it all together. Ignorant to how his own traumatic experiences shaped him and his role as a persecutor of Christians.

In chapter five, we review how for centuries, the Baptist church has experienced rejection and ridicule. Without resolution and addressing the mental exhaustion of being made outcast, the Baptist faith has continued and has evolved in her rejection practices. The rejection is so embedded in the culture and blood line of the Baptist denomination we are completely unaware of its affects and continued practices. This research has motivated me to investigate and observe more of how unaware we are of our pain. As a result of our mistreatment from others and one another, we are clueless of how we have negatively impacted ourselves and our future of Baptistdom. My hope is that we can

explore and examine the impacts of traumatic events and determine its connections to unawareness and negative behavior. With a faithful expedition of this research we can get a better understanding of how mental health is vital to growth as we seek to become kingdom disciples.

Theoretically, traumatic events play a major role in the behavior of humankind, especially unaddressed trauma. When an individual has experienced a trauma and has sought not to deal with the ramifications of that trauma, it could result in negative behavior rising to the surface unaware. The church has gone long enough not clear on her behavior and negative impact on others. Many members have gone extended periods of time with pain and not being aware of how it has influenced their behavior.

It was in my first semester, during one of our cohort meetings, that I saw real time one of my triggers set off and reacting in a negative way. I did not realize that I had a trigger, and I was under the impression that I was healed of some of the struggles I faced before. I later discovered that I was always working on my symptoms of trauma not the core or source of my trauma. The church and the individuals in the church have all been traumatized and yet we are walking around as if nothing has ever happened to us. As the church, we have not recognized that we have been wounded and to what extent of our pain and wounds.

This project is heavily connected to the trauma theory because it can lead us to finding effective ways of dealing with the pain in our lives and exploring and defining why people behave the way that they do. Many people behave the way that they do due to historical, acute, chronic, and complex trauma. This project will help determine how effective safe vulnerable spaces will be in providing self-awareness practices.

Historically, we discovered that Saul was completely unaware of his negative behavior demonstrated toward Christians which is why God asked him “why persecuted thou me?” Saul was clueless about the traumatic events of his life informing his negative behavior. Historical trauma is a great theory to explain why oppressive behavior persist in the Baptist church. Complex trauma is constantly complicating and stunting the growth of the church unconsciously. Womanist theology teaches us to be forgiving and inclusive in our practices and attempts to be relational. Healing can be achieved; healthy behavior and self-awareness can be embraced and experienced. In chapter six, we see how these foundational ideas, historical, biblical, theological and theoretical proves itself to be helpful in the quest to become more aware of self and developing strategies to work toward healthy behavior. More clarity was provided at the completion of the project. The project consisted of a two- day workshop that focused on self-awareness, the urgency of understanding self- awareness and self-awareness practices.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Who we are can directly affect or impact who and where we serve in various contexts? Our history constantly informs our behavior, how we think and perceive the actions and intentionality of others. The exploration of my history and what informs my decision making and how I relate to others has been insightful and informative. In this chapter, I would like to examine the contents of my spiritual autobiography and contextual analysis and see how they intersect with one another. I will cover three objectives while exploring the synergy of the two thoughts. The first objective will be to describe the ways in which my ministry interests and skills relate to the needs of my context. The second objective will be to describe how the relationship between my ministry interests and skills and the needs of my context can form the basis for my ministry project. The last objective will be to develop a theme statement and hypothesis on which I will build my Doctor of Ministry project.

My most previous context became the eye-opener to what I began exploring in this chapter. In reflection, I did not know that my hurt laid so close to the surface of my heart. My previous context led me to a place where I discovered where my pain came from. Some of my pain came from the church, an unlikely and unbelievable place. Part of this discovery trapped me in a place where I realized that I had unresolved anger toward others. This reality showed itself when during a class a presenter did not

understand my question. I became upset at the presenter and began acting out after class. I have operated under the impression that everything was about me for a while, not understanding that everyone's responses or actions were not about me at all. How many others operate under this mindset? How many more of us believe that everything is about us? Ultimately, I would like to help churches through the association identify the hurt that exists within individuals and the congregations of the member churches. I served as a chaplain for over sixteen years and in my service, I encountered so many patients who have been hurt because no one from their church has reached out to them; or they were too afraid to tell the church why they remain so disconnected.

My ministry interests consist, of aiding the church in identifying and observing various types of hurt in the congregation and to bring about a loving community. A community that once was not constantly submerged in self but one another. A community that looked out for one another and sought to build others to strengthen the community. Change cannot come by way of a dictatorship. Change must occur by way of creating spaces for people to learn and be shown what hurt looks like. Anger, sadness, happiness, love and comfort are familiar and easy emotions to recognize generally. However, shame, grief, hurt and depression are feelings and emotional states that the congregation has not learned to recognize or identify. So many churches are suffering because the pastor comes into the congregation trying to push their agenda when the congregants cannot advance their agenda because they have not addressed the current barrier to change. Congregations and pastors are hurting, and the major problem is that they do know that they are hurting; they are walking around as wounded Christians.

Another interest is in providing training for congregations for people who are hurting. What good will it do to diagnose a problem but not know how to handle the situation once it has been identified. Churches must be empowered to deal with concerning situations and if not trained learn how to direct individuals to the appropriate place for assistance. The association is a perfect opportunity to train people on a larger scale. There are churches looking for a way or model to deal with the current concerns that plague our community; the challenge is that there is a lack of training and collaboration.

One of the weaknesses of our association is that we are not reaching our young and middle-aged adults. Being a part of this generational group allows me to observe the obvious which is the association needs relatable programs that young and middle-aged groups can participate and benefit from. This initiative can prove substantial if implemented and result in the association growing as well as effective in dealing with church or personal hurt. My skill set includes mediation, pastoral care, and Christian education. These three-specific skillsets work hand in hand as well as overlap the other. Using the three skillsets would allow me to work with the Christian education department to help design a curriculum that would facilitate learning about church and emotional hurt, developing a model of selecting a pastor, designing a procedure before selecting a pastor and expectations that churches can share with clergy interested in pastoring member churches of the association. More importantly, like Dr. Charles Sargent, we need to understand what the member churches within the association would like for us to do.³ As I share my thoughts I am forced to remember not to fall into the trap of others and

³ Atlanta Missionary Baptist Association, *Baptist Alive* (Atlanta, GA: East Point Printing, 2004), 71.

push my own agenda but work diligently to remain focused on how to aid the growth, strength, and effectiveness of the association. While examining the findings of my contextual analysis and spiritual autobiography, I concluded that there are three determinations that can be the foundation for my project. My project will be based on dealing with the identification of unaddressed hurt and pain. Like relationships, many people say I do not want to fall in love because I do not want to get hurt again. The association is hurting because people have been hurt and due to lack of connection, relatability and the association does not realize what is or has happened. Like the children of Israel, they struggled with the cycle of sin and judgment. They continued in this cycle because the parents failed to teach the children what God had done for them. The children of Israel negated to tell their children about the promises of God and how God came through on his promises. The purpose of the association has not been taught to the younger generations and as a result, the younger generation lacks the confidence and connection to the association.

Also, like National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and National Panhellenic Council, the question remains are they still relative and useful to this present time. Yes, many of the organizations are struggling with change and seeking to understand how to become relatable. In consideration of the foundation of this doctoral project, I had to understand the context for this project to take place. The hope is to explore the needs of the association. One of those needs begs to ask the question what is the purpose of an association? Writer, Dr. Orlando K. Winters, also asked a similar question in the

association, published in 2004, *Is there a need for an Association?*⁴ (Atlanta Missionary Baptist Association n.d.) Currently, the association would be an older term used by older Baptist congregants and preachers. Now preachers are leaving their associations and are aligning themselves with networks of preachers or fellowships where there is someone operating as a bishop. Many pastors, preachers, and churches have lost faith in the idea of associations because of the lack of direction and effectiveness of Baptist bodies and organizations. The younger generations are looking at books and other frameworks and templates to guide their church in what they believe is the right direction. Using my ministry interest and skills, coupled with the established needs, we will explore the first determination for the basis of my project.

When the association begins to back up their purpose with training and answers to contemporary concerns it begins to open a conversation regarding relevancy. When the association circles around to the original practices, people will see how important it is to be a part of the association. The church can no longer afford to be just spiritually minded. We must go back to being civic minded as well. We must be wholistic in our thoughts and practices. The creation of a format to benefit the member churches would allow them to view the association as a resource because it would not appear as if the association was trying to dictate to them a plan; but it would aid them in understanding the benefits of being a part of an association. Winters writes during a time of crisis; an association can provide some sense of direction that will aid in fulfilling the God-given destiny.⁵

⁴ Atlanta Missionary Baptist Association, *Baptist Alive*, 59.

⁵ Atlanta Missionary Baptist Association, *Baptist Alive*, 59.

In addition, they would no longer be expected and or required to go outside to the association to figure out what to do next when they are without a pastor. We are currently living in a day where individuals are searching for proven and effective models for ministry, while also feeling supported and not being dictated. Similar to hospitals, many medical institutions are using a program called EPIC. Churches need a program that fits their needs when it comes down to searching for a pastor and doing impactful ministry.

Making a complaint about an issue carries less weight unless you offer a solution that can be considered. Churches have been dealing with the candidating process for decades. Unlike the Presbyterian and Methodist churches where pastors get assigned, Baptist are autonomous in that the local church selects their own pastor. The practice of selecting a pastor has always been predicated on prayer, seeking God and listening for God to give an answer on who to select. Over the years that practice has changed. Churches are going to a business approach where they are asking for CDs/DVDs, credit and criminal background checks, and pictures of you and family; and they are expecting the preacher to pay for their own expenses to get to the church. Rightfully understood, the church has been robbed, abused and assaulted by men and women who have claimed to be called by God. Some pastors have been called by God, but they come to the new church with open wounds left unattended and bleeding as they attempt to embrace a new congregation. As a result, the pastor and congregation begin a fight, and someone wins so they believe. The pastor leaves with more wounds and the congregation develops a hardened heart against pastors; and now they see a need to protect themselves from other

pastors. Unfortunately, this has become more than opinion but a reality for me as I have served at various churches in Chicago, Alabama, and Georgia.

The challenge is not only the church trying to protect themselves but churches who lack the information or model to begin the search process because the pastor never put a process in place, in case the pastor dies, resigns unexpectedly or is asked to step down suddenly. What is a congregation to do? Where does the congregation turn for wisdom and guidance concerning a pastoral search? The new pastor has withdrawn from their association who gives them guidance. Who do they trust? The association must be a mainstay for not only the congregations but to the pastors. The association's fundamental purpose is to show her relevancy to both in order that they may earn their trust and establish themselves as a resource to the community at large. The association is compelled to transform herself to be a wellspring for spiritual advancement, ministerial impact, an information center and an advocate for justice. There must be some relativity between the church and the association. The question that I and other young clergy have asked is where is the association's applicability to the everyday church life and growth? How does or can the association aid in making disciples in the church? The question raised is geared more to the black Baptist. In the Southern Baptist Convention, Inc., they have an association that owns a building and has resources available for churches to come and pick up to distribute at their church. They also have set training for church leaders to attend regularly and individuals are not charged. Clearly, each church within that convention has assessed a fee however, churches do not complain because they know that what they are paying is minuscule to what they are getting in return. The association must establish some short and long-term goals that would be in congruence with the

current society. These goals must be able to strengthen us as disciples of Christ, empower us as a community and be informative as stewards of our church and or ministry; so, we may serve the area in which we dwell.

My last context is where I believe that I would be conducting my doctoral project. However, I was proven wrong. The Lord redirected me from the church. This experience took a toll on my family and me. I was led to do my context with an association. Like myself, there is a cycle of rejection and pain within the association. The association is experiencing rejection from young and middle-aged adults, new pastors and now young people. Churches who have experienced some hurt from the association have also taken a back seat including myself until a few years ago.

Context

The local association that I am currently serving in is in the heart of the city. It consists of over twenty-four churches within the metro area. The local association is one of the many associations within a national Baptist convention. Out of the twenty-four churches, there are nineteen churches that are financially and physically active. This association has been founded and led by the local clergy. One clergy that aided in its formation was a family member of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The local association was formed in 1903. The local association promotes preaching of the Gospel, Christian education, and missions. The association meets annually during the second week in October. There are two major projects that the association works to provide, one a scholarship for college-bound students and the second one is scholarships for students

that are currently attending seminary. The primary work of the association is conducted through the following departments:

1. The Women's Department
2. The Laymen's Department
3. The Youth and Young Adult Department
4. The Congress of Christian Education

As a child remembering what it was like going to association meetings, I recall various churches from all over the city to be a part of a training that churches could take back to their congregation and apply to their ministry for growth. Important findings concerning the association are the changing of the guard in several of the churches. Recently, a couple of the churches experienced the absence of a pastor. Churches were not prepared to create a search committee to find a pastor. Pastors vacated the congregation due to retirement, resignation, and death. Secondly, the member churches are selecting preachers from outside of the state, association, convention, and denomination. As a result, churches have become dormant in their functioning in the association. Pastors who have come from other states, conventions and denominations have shown a disinterest in the association. Ultimately, culminating in church division because the members of the church are upset because of the pastor's position to no longer contribute to the association. Thirdly, the expression of churches wanting to pull out of the association because of the concern that the association is not being relative. Associations, convention, and other faith bodies are charging local churches a fee to participate in the overall body; however, the problem is that the associations and conventions are not providing information and training worthwhile to take back to their respective churches.

Finally, the final observation consists of the lack of young and middle-aged adults partaking in the association events. Every time we meet there are only children, youth and seniors. The presence of young and middle-aged adults is clearly absent from the training and association events. One weakness is not being relatable and inclusive of everyone. Another weakness is the lack of grooming associate ministers within the association. If associate ministers were trained properly, the member churches of the association would not have to go outside of the association to look for a pastor; and associate ministers would not have to leave the association to look for a church to pastor. The pastor would remain invested in the association. The final weakness is we lack having our own property or building to do ministry. All the money we are using to rent space can be designated for purchasing property that belongs to and meets the needs of the association.

After reviewing the observations and weaknesses of the association, the theme that pronounces itself the most is rejection. The association is in decline. It is another community prepped for decay. Any community that people no longer believe in is destined to fail. A community needs life breathed into itself to keep it going. The association needs an IV fusion of education, healing, and unselfish living. The association is being rejected by Baptist congregations, pastors and young and middle-aged persons. The association has been and remains to be led by pastors. If pastors leave the association or the pastors do not understand the history and purpose of the association, the organization could be lost or lose further direction and become completely disconnected from the church. If the association created a module for

churches to follow in selecting a pastor, work to understand the recent disconnectedness and became relative, we could change the face and myths of the association.

While going through Clinical Pastoral Education I once heard my supervisor say people do not care how much you know but they do want to know how much you care. We are living in an information-driven society and people are constantly searching for answers to their questions. The association must be willing to educate congregants on more than the spiritual things but the practical things as well. Topics like, how do I deal with a mother who has dementia? How do I work and take care of father while he is at my house sick? How do I move my parents from California to Florida? These are questions from the middle-aged people. Young adults are asking the spiritual questions, how do pay my tithes and my bills? How does it impact my faith? Do I really believe what my parents believe? Will God be okay with me missing service today to sleep in? How does the association answer these questions?

Mental and emotional pain are becoming more prevalent in society. People are now recognizing that mental illness exists. Child abuse, depression, shame, bi-polar, grief, and anxiety are all operating full force in the church. Who will address it all? What does it look like in the church; and will anyone ever speak to it all? There must be a space for people to work through their hurt and pain. When a pastor dies who meet with the congregation to work through their grief before they begin to put a search committee together and begin the pastoral search? Who challenges them to express their concerns for the next pastor before they begin finalizing expectations and requirements when God's expectations are written in the word of God? Healing is an important task for the association to facilitate for churches. Healing is also important for the association

to have among member churches. Dialogue and reconciliation can bring about insight as to how to make the association credible and relative.

The style of leadership should be an unselfish one. The leadership style should be predicated on growing the organization that you are serving. Servant transformative leadership is based upon serving people in a way that would cause a transformation in the life of a person or organization. These reflections reveal the key to success in enlisting others. “Critical incidents present opportunities for leaders to teach important lessons appropriate norms of behavior.”⁶ This type of leadership abandons the idea that leadership and pastors are operating out of selfishness. This thought encourages one to hold one another accountable with respect. Unlike selfish living, which promotes individuals to do what they want when they want and not care about the organization. Selfish living also suggests that individuals are not willing to change so that the association could grow but rather rest in the unnecessary meaningless traditions that disregard exhortation and spiritual maturity.

Education, healing and addressing unselfish living through dialogue should be handled with care and respect. A safe space must be created to have dialogue about the conversations of the heart. After the conversations have been held, we must acknowledge what comes from the conversation and seek out ways to address the concerns of the member churches and implement agreeable solutions that would effectively change the view of the association. Being opened to matters of the heart, understanding, and forgiving could assist in becoming practical and sensitive to twenty first century ministry and available to the young and middle-aged adults. If churches

⁶ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge, How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations*, 5th ed. (San Francisco, CA: The Leadership Challenge, 2012), 89.

became open to mental health and matters of the heart it could result in bridging the gap of generations and fostering a model for organizations around the world. My ministry journey has prepared me for this moment where I could use my ministry interest and skills to contribute to the association.

Professionally, I have worked at the Department of Labor. This job was obtained after I got married. The supervisor of the department, Ms. Peggy, was very gracious and kind. My responsibilities included helping persons find jobs, aiding them in filing for unemployment and facilitating classes on job searches and interviewing skills. I started a library at the department for customers to get books as a resource while they looked for jobs. I resigned to become an intern chaplain at the children's hospital. I joined a well-respected chaplaincy program throughout the country. I trained as a chaplain but more so discovered more about myself and how to deal with systems. Clearly, the internship was not enough, so I joined the residency chaplaincy program. I learned to integrate dealing with self and systems. The residency ended and the second-year residency began. I could not believe how much I had gained about myself. I accomplished so much related to crisis and pain. I thought I was ready to serve the church, so I thought. I later earn board certification after a few years of being a staff chaplain. After a few years of staff chaplaincy, I felt ready to try other ministries in the area of chaplaincy. I left and went to hospice. I did not realize the kind of documentation that was needed was so intense.

When I recognized how the job was causing physical pain, I walked away from my job. I worked a few part-time positions as a chaplain at different hospitals. I was unemployed for some months; the house was foreclosed on and car repossessed. One day I was asked to cover for two chaplains while they were on maternity leave at a few

hospitals. At one of the hospitals, the chaplain had planned to return. The other hospital, the chaplain submitted her resignation. The doctors were so impressed with my skillset that they wrote to the manager of the chaplaincy; and stressed how they wanted me to be their chaplain. I did not fill out an application and I got the job immediately. The job was new and exciting.

After some years, things begin to change. I wanted more, education and experience so I applied for another position within the system. I transferred to another building covering another unit and I worked there for a few years but realized that I was still unhappily. I wanted more opportunities to discuss chaplaincy and get more educational opportunities. The hospital was not willing to support school or continuing education. I applied for a managerial position at another hospital. I did well in my interview with the president of the institution. I was denied the job and was later brought to the understanding that it may not have been for me. The hospital called me back and offered me a position as a chaplain to help the leader that was hired. I was appreciative and accepted the position; and the leader and I became good friends.

Things became turbulent at the hospital. I got burnt out because of the workload. I had to be on call for five other hospitals all over thirty miles from home at night. The expectation was to still report to work in the morning. After the holidays, there were multiple deaths and I was required to attend each one. LifeLine, is an organ and tissue procurement organization and a representative came to the hospital to recruit me; and I took the job in organ and tissue donation. This was an awesome job, out of seventy-seven families only seventeen said no to donation. The job was rewarding however, the

family was unhappy, and the children were missing their dad. I prayed for a job near the home.

A hospice opportunity opened again. By this time, I thought that since I had more experience and was more mature this would be a fantastic opportunity. I went to the job interview and the director stopped in the beginning of the interview and said that she knew me. I was her chaplain at the children's hospital when her son died. Everything was not good after being hired. There was a woman in the program that was part-time and filling in until they hired someone else. She was declined from the job and they made her train me; it was not a good situation. I expressed my concerns. The trainer did not train and I was left to do the job of two people, chaplain and bereavement coordinator again. I got released from the job. Georgia department of labor brought about some vindication because they said that they had to pay unemployment because they did not handle business correctly. In addition, the day before I was fired, the Lord said that my last day on the job was today; and he was there for that family. The family that I was ministering to was related to a couple I married years ago in the Bahamas. The very next day, the manager called me in and said that this is not working out and released me from my duties. Less than a month later, the very thing that I was asking for which was to help with eighty patients and 250 bereaved families; they hired a new chaplain and part-time bereaved coordinator. Now, I am back to square one, being unemployed.

My desire is to pastor, write, become a grand chaplain for Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., most importantly complete the Doctor of Ministry program as well as finish becoming a supervisor in training. I remain nervous and unsettled doubt about the ability to do the work has settled in. Professionally, I see myself supervising individuals

desiring to be chaplains. Pouring love, joy, and wisdom into students like myself.

Civically, I want to do more. I want to speak to the social minds of our community and empower others to take the power as community and speak to the injustices of the country. I just do not know how to do it and do it in a way that will be pleasing to God and it will be received. I know I would make a great pastor. I am ready to love on a group of people and make disciples and deal with individual's hurt that prevents them from doing God's will.

While growing up I recall the elders telling us to keep living and remember that every experience is for a purpose. I remember at every academic institution, I entered during a pivotal time. Each president was on the way out and the school was preparing to begin a search for a new president. The association is an organization that appears to lack change and demands that we reconsider how to become more practical. My experience has also informed me of how necessary it is not to take everything so personal. I have also learned that everything is not about me. You never know what an individual may have gone through.

Serving as a chaplain has taught me how important it is not to approach situations with an agenda but with an opened mind and an opened mental file cabinet of experiences to pull from. However, each environment has been different. Serving as an organ and tissue coordinator has taught me to evaluate situations, explore the causality of the problem, understand how everything is related and most importantly ask questions and seek clarity as to what occurred. My experience as a hospice chaplain has taught me the importance of paperwork, creating a plan and follow up. Hospital chaplaincy aided in understanding systems, learning how to work with a variety of cultures, situations and

empowered me as an advocate and educator. As a chaplain, I have seen several patients and families come in demanding relief for their pain and plan to resolve their medical concerns and questions. For a while, I was baffled by one question. When the physician comes into the quiet room and gives the answers to the questions or the room where they explain what happened, I have seen individuals reject the physician's answers and solutions. I have seen families reject the physician's remorse and genuine concern. Mainly because they were not ready to handle the answers to the questions.

In relation to my present context, I can use my experience to help facilitate a space where individuals and member churches can indulge in healthy conversations around how to deal with the rejection by pastors, churches and young and middle-aged adults. My spiritual journey has been filled with rejection or feelings similar to rejection. Through this journey, I have come to a place where I now understand the reality of the heart. Just because you have been rejected does not mean that every time someone does you wrong it is rejection. The similarity between the association, congregants and myself has been rejection. I was clueless about the hurt of the congregation. There are so many congregants that depend on spiritual leadership. When congregants are hurting it becomes difficult to see and hear from God because our hurt is blinding and deafening. The bigger problem is not knowing that we are in pain and we find ourselves lashing out against the person that reminded us of our current hurt.

Through the association, we can work to deal with the hurt that plagues the members of our association. The association would take up the mantle by leading the congregation through a process that would help to identify their hurt, stories, and history of previous and past pastors that will inform their decision-making pertaining to a

selecting a pastor. The topic I intend to explore is helping churches prepare for the pastoral search. In years past, churches have selected pastors for various reasons. Being a part of the candidating process has also been around for years. The difference now is that hearing about vacant churches has changed. When a church was vacant it took weeks or months before people knew a church was looking for a pastor. Now the internet has shortened that time and people would know about a vacant church in minutes. As a result, churches have and are taking a different approach to guard themselves from the wolves and hirelings of our day. Nevertheless, churches cannot guard themselves against the dangers of this world, especially, if they are not leaning on God for inspiration and wisdom. The danger is knowing that churches are under the impression that they can protect themselves from pastors who do not mean them well. The reality is churches have not considered the hurt and pain caused by the pastors of the past. Resulting in members holding resentment for the pastor that hurt them but for the office of the pastor.

In my ministerial experience, I have learned that congregations and preachers are operating with a mistrust. Congregations are waiting for preachers to mess up. Churches are now putting pastors on a one-year contract and making preachers candidate for a year or more. Some churches do not want a pastor at all, they are using preachers to only preach on Sundays while the deacons and trustees run the operations of the church. You also have preachers who have become or allow themselves to be distant and to keep from being hurt by the members. Churches are actively trying to pursue preachers who are currently serving churches and negating the qualified preachers pursuing the pastorate.

My interests have always included growing people, making disciples and bringing about healing and transformation. I realize that transformation occurs when one is open

to change. People become open to change when individuals feel connected and have the trust of the person creating change. My ministry skills include evaluating groups and creating spaces of trust to have dialogue. I recently taught a class on “Church Hurt.” During the class, students felt comfortable sharing the difficult stories and asking personal questions of one another. Creating these spaces can aid in accomplishing making individuals feel comfortable to talk. Respect, understanding, and trust are required to hear one another especially when it comes to hearing that we are not successful in our attempts to effectively leaders. Many people fear change and what change can bring. When transformation takes place my chaplaincy skills can assist in asking the right questions regarding how individuals are dealing with the journey. Often, people are fearful of the unknown and of the paths that are new. My skills not only allow me to ask the right questions, it avails me to listen to what people are saying. During conversations, both parties struggle in listening because they are too busy trying to prove the person wrong, which results in them missing what the individual is saying. The first principle of dialogue is to start with the heart. That is your own heart, per *Crucial Conversations*.⁷ While an individual is talking, we also spend a lot of time trying to come up with a rebuttal. So often we miscommunicate because communication is done in so many other ways. Tone, attitude, eye contact, and body movement all convey a message. I have been trained to read them. In addition, I have learned to seek clarity, acknowledge what has been said and repeat what was told to me. All these skills impact the outcome of the conversation. The needs of the context remain, providing education, facilitating healing and creating safe dialogues that promote transformation.

⁷ Kerry Patterson et al., *Crucial Conversations Tools for Talking When Stakes are High* (New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 2002), 27.

Another skill I developed as a chaplain was working through systems to create something new. When I was working at the children's hospital, we were trying to determine what we could do to promote chaplaincy. I came up with the idea to create a television station that was dedicated to talking about the spiritual concerns of the patients. The task was complicated. We had to work through getting a station dedicated to the chaplaincy department, get permission for leadership by buying into the idea and finally working through the system to help us in getting the station ready to view.

The general nature and content of this proposal is to increase the association's relevance by providing churches with a blueprint for how to help prepare the church for the pastoral search. To accomplish this goal, there must be a willingness for churches to be open to the idea that the process of searching for a pastor can become tedious, time-consuming and stressful to the congregation. Congregations are constantly seeking for someone to lead them with love and respect. They want to know that whoever comes into the pastoral role will come with the purpose of developing them to become disciples of Christ. Unfortunately, not all churches have the same intent. Some churches rush through the process just so that they can say they have a pastor. I would like to see this project work to aid churches in selecting the pastor after God's own heart for that particular congregation. I would like to learn the mindset or intentions behind individuals serving in the pastoral search committee. I would also like to learn if congregations are open to healing for the future.

In this project, I intend to bring about the relevancy of the association by creating a program that will address the unidentified concerns of congregants before they begin the pastoral search. My hypothesis is if the association provided and implemented a

program that would prepare, and address churches concerns before they begin the pastoral search it would increase the association's relevance with member churches. I realize that there are many books and articles pertaining to aiding churches in the candidacy process that I am unaware of. My project is focused on preparing the congregants before they begin the search by addressing identified and unidentified issues with the previous or former pastors. From a spiritual perspective, I would like to aid churches in getting the pastor that God has designed for them specifically.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Self-awareness in the Christian Church is a door labeled off limits. In the scriptures, God arrest Saul's attention and shows him that he was accessing the wrong door. Saul was using the door of hatred to make himself great and to feel the need to be approved. Saul was unaware of the degree of his negative, abusive and oppressive behavior to Christians. The lack of self-awareness forces us to operate blindly in various areas of our lives. These blind spots in our lives can turn us against God instead of to God. The difficult part about this reality is when we do not know that we have a blind spot, or a blindness and we keep operating as if we are always in the right. Saul's lack of self-awareness made him spiritually blind and later manifested itself into physical blindness.

In this chapter, Acts 9:10-19 will be explored. Saul's connectedness to the lack of self-awareness that led to his oppressive behavior will also be examined. The scriptures do not speak specifically to the terms of self-awareness. However, the scriptures do speak to blindness and the result of regaining one's sight. When one moves from a lack of self-awareness to self-awareness, it is same as being blind and regaining your sight.

In this chapter, the Acts text will be exegeted. The Acts text will examine the various criticisms, explore the authorship, journey through the meaning of the text and context, discuss Saul's inner turmoil and conclude by showing how this particular

passage of scripture is connected to the research project of dealing with the lack self-awareness. After exploring this text and the life of Saul the reader will discover that Saul struggled with several challenges in his life. I believe that which were internal. Like many clergy, congregationalist and unchurched individuals, we oppress others by our negative behavior. Saul's offensive treatment toward Christians were an outward sign of his internal turmoil that plagued him unknowingly. Paul was blind to the triggers that led to negative behavior that kept him on the path to physical and spiritual destruction.

Saul's internal conflict consisted of three realities. Saul's first reality was his insecurities and his ability to deflect. Saul had unaddressed issues of who he was, how he appeared and his origin. Often times we can work to project our energy in a way that would keep others attention on someone else when we do not want others to view what we are ashamed about the most. Secondly, Saul battled with truth. Saul was under the impression that he was responding correctly by degrading and killing Christians. Saul believed that he was operating under the will of God. Saul was raised to see things a certain way only to discover that he was on the wrong side. Finally, Saul struggled with who to please the most. Saul sought out to get the approval of the people. Saul needed to gain the acceptance of others and he did it by persecuting Christians. As a result of these internal battles, they became triggers for Saul unknowingly, ultimately culminating in the destruction of Christian lives and the brutality and mistreatment of Christians.

This transformative story of Acts 9:1-19 (10-19) opens with Saul sharing with the high priest how he wanted to continue to threaten and kill Christians everywhere. Saul requested letters to the synagogues in Damascus so that he could find people who belonged to "the way," (people of God) and bring them back to Jerusalem for

persecution. As Saul was traveling on the road to Damascus, he saw a light and he fell to the ground as he was with his company. Saul heard a voice from heaven asking him why are you against me? Saul inquired of the voice that was speaking. Jesus responded that it was him that he was going against.

Saul was then instructed to rise and go into the city, although Saul was with company, they did not hear what was being said or understood what really happened. Saul stood up and realized that he could not see. He was told that he would get further instructions later on. For three days Saul did not eat or drink. He was guided by his company by the hand. Like Saul we are blinded by our own internal afflictions. One must take us by the hand and guide us to a designated place to get what we need for restoration. Saul was blind and uncertain as to what was taking place in his life. In order for us to understand what took place before this event occurred in Saul's life, we must first explore the authorship of the Book of Acts.

Luke "The Beloved Physician" has been identified as the author of Acts. Many scholars claim Luke as being the only New Testament writer who was not a Jew. Henry H. Halley would go further by saying that Luke is the only Gentile writer in the Bible.¹ Luke has been mentioned as one who had many skills beyond his profession as a physician. Some have mentioned him as a painter. According to William Barclay, Luke was a skilled painter, a painting of Mary in a Spanish Cathedral to this day which purports to be by Luke.² Barclay also suggested that he had an eye for vivid things. My

¹ Henry H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), 559.

² William Barclay, *The Daily Bible Study Series: The Gospel of Luke* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975), 1.

experience with physicians in the healthcare setting is a physician's close attention to details. Getting and giving the details about an individual and their body is central to a physician beginning to examine a patient and understanding their issues. Without the details of a patient's body, problems, history of problems or past problems the physician will hesitate moving forward to prevent from causing more harm. Colossians 4:14 speaks to Paul referring to Luke as a doctor. Barclay describes Luke as being sympathetic. Barclay begins his introduction of his book by describing ministers as one who sees the best in men, lawyers seeing men at their worst, but doctors sees men as they are. Despite Barclays lack of inclusive language, he states that Luke saw men and loved them all.³

Compared to many of the writers in the Bible, little is known of Luke and his life. Many have focused on his style of writing, what kind of servant he was and his writings. Halley along with other scholars have declared Luke to be from Antioch, however, he does not fail to share that Ramsey, one of the great Pauline scholars, believes Luke is from Philippi.⁴ Halley's perspective on Luke speaks of Luke as one who focused on the humanity of Jesus and his kindness toward the weak, the suffering the outcast.⁵

The writing of Luke has been questioned many times especially when he comes to his sources. Like any other physician/scientist, he was a researcher and he gathered information from what he heard, learned from others and witnessed himself. *The New Bible Dictionary* states, that Luke was not only acquainted with the written accounts of

³ Barclay, *The Daily Bible Study Series*, 1.

⁴ Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook*, 559.

⁵ Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook*, 485.

Jesus, but he had persons who were eyewitnesses and he wrote his accounts based on careful research into his various sources of information.⁶

Douglas described Luke's writings as a man of culture, education and his work has much more of a claim to being a deliberate literary production than the other Gospels.⁷

Luke was a lover of all humankind. He wrote of the humanity of Jesus and focused a great deal on how God's love was for all. Surprisingly enough, not much was written on who he was an individual. There is some research that would suggest that he did not have to worry about dividing his time between the ministry and family concerns until he died at the age of 84 in Boeotia.⁸ Luke, author of both the Gospel of Luke and Acts, dedicated himself to writing to people who represented the have nots.

Like all of the authors in the Bible, their audiences were inclusive of an individual, certain sect of people and all present and future Christians. Scholars have claimed that the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts were addressed to Theophilus. No one seems clear as to who Theophilus was and his relationship with the beloved physician, Luke. Miller makes three guesses regarding Theophilus. The first guess is that Theophilus was a donor who paid Luke to write stories to preserve for the future. Secondly, he suggested that he was no one in particular but to all who loved God or considered to be a friend of God. Lastly, he was a Roman official, someone in political

⁶ J. D. Douglas et al., *The New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 1962), 714.

⁷ Douglas et al., *The New Bible Dictionary*, 715.

⁸ Douglas et al., *The New Bible Dictionary*, 713.

leadership, and that Christianity was not a threat to Rome or that Luke was trying to defend Paul or another Christian on trial.⁹

In the journey to understanding Acts and the Acts message, Luke focuses on the growth of the Christian church and the love of Jesus for all. Luke was a well-educated Gentile, physician, and missionary co-worker of the Apostle Paul.¹⁰ Luke gives his readers typical or representative experiences that serve to advance God's purpose, for this cause we can say Luke is writing a theological history.¹¹ According to Dunn, Jesus has become the content of the message; the proclaimer has become the proclaimed.¹² Luke's writings was for all those that read. His vocation as a physician was not limited to hospitals or just physical healing. Luke took on a holistic approach to healing. Luke was about the physical and spiritual healing of humankind. Mears describes Acts as the best guidebook to missions and the best motive to missions.¹³ Luke has painted a beautiful image of what missions should and could look like. Luke has also written to describe the power and the role in which the Holy Spirit used men and women of God. Dr. Mears

⁹ Stephen M. Miller, *The Complete Guide to the Bible* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Publishing, 2007), 333-334.

¹⁰ J. Daniel Hays and J.Scott Duvall, *The Baker Illustrated Bible Handbook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 699.

¹¹ Hays and Duvall, *The Baker Illustrated Bible Handbook*, 700.

¹² James G. D. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1977), 17.

¹³ Henrietta C. Mears, *What the Bible is All About* (Carol Stream, IL: Gospel Light Publications, 1966), 415.

claims that Acts is not a record of the Acts of the apostles, it records the acts of the Holy Spirit through the apostles.¹⁴ In Acts, as in his Gospel, Luke gave an orderly account.¹⁵

Luke deserves more credit than what has been given to him. Although Luke is the only Gentile writer in the New Testament, he proves himself to be scholarly and inclusive in a way that his writing can be for all that reads his work. “Luke wrote to the world at large that Jesus has come to seek and save the lost, whoever and wherever they may be.”¹⁶ “Luke’s authorship of Acts has never been seriously challenged, though some have wondered why, if he was Paul’s traveling companion, why does he never mention that Paul wrote letters to his churches.”¹⁷ *The New Bible Dictionary* declares Luke’s writing specifically as a historian. It is believed by many scholars that the only reason why Acts was added to the canon is because it was written by the same person who contributed to the four gospels. Marshall describes Luke as the only one who wrote a history of the early church.¹⁸ Marshall also lifts two important preliminary points made by Luke in his writing. First Luke writes in the style of the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint. Secondly, Acts is the second part of a two-volume work whose first part is the Gospel of Luke.¹⁹ The implication, therefore, that Acts records what Jesus continued

¹⁴ Mears, *What the Bible is All About*, 413.

¹⁵ John Schwarz, *Word Alive! Learning Loving and Living the Christian Faith in the Context of Modern Culture* (Minneapolis, MN: Tabgha Foundation, 1993), 63.

¹⁶ Schwarz, *Word Alive!* 55.

¹⁷ Schwarz, *Word Alive!* 62.

¹⁸ I. Howard Marshall, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Acts of the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 18.

¹⁹ Marshall, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, 19.

to do and to teach through his Spirit after his ascension.²⁰ The Book of Acts resembles a classical historical monograph, it has a preface and consists of a chronological narrative into which speeches and a letter are inserted as in the work of Greek historians.²¹ It is imperative that in looking at the problem of the lack of self-awareness and comparing it to Saul and his life, we need to explore it by examining the text, context and meaning of the historical and social background of the Acts 9:10-19. It is believed that Acts was written to show the expansion of the church and the ministry of Jesus Christ. Luke wrote the Book of Acts to show that the church continued the ministry of Jesus Christ.²²

Saul was born a Roman citizen of an influential family thus of Jewish, Greek and Roman background, according to Halley.²³ “Judaism...is a religious and cultural grouping existing from ancient times, historically connected with the land of Palestine, and characterized by a strong monotheistic faith based on the part of the Bible which Christians are accustomed to call the Old Testament.”²⁴ In Palestine and in the diaspora Jewish communities elsewhere, Jewish and Hellenistic culture came into direct contact and in some cases conflict. Saul is his Hebrew name; but he is better known by his Greek name Paul. He became a Christian and wrote almost half the books of the New Testament. Saul is an intolerant Jewish traditionalist.²⁵ Saul believed that if any of the

²⁰ Hays and Duvall, *The Baker Illustrated Bible Handbook*, 703-704.

²¹ George A. Kennedy, *The New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 114.

²² Hays and Duvall, *The Baker Illustrated Bible Handbook*, 703.

²³ Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook*, 568.

²⁴ Carolyn Osiek, *What Are They Saying About the Social Setting of the New Testament* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992), 11.

²⁵ Miller, *The Complete Guide to the Bible*, 365.

Jews taught heresy anything that he or the other members of the Pharisees branch of Judaism consider as lies that dishonored God; those Jews needed to be arrested, tried, and punished or persecuted.²⁶

In the passage of scripture, there are three different accounts of Saul conversion story. All three stories are found in Acts, 9:1-19, Acts 22:1-16 and Acts 26:9-18. Acts 9:1-18 has been examined from four different translations. The translations include: The King James Version, The New International Version, The New King James Version and New Revised Standard Version. After looking at all the versions, most of the stories in Acts chapter nine are similar in thought. However, verses one through five varied based upon wording and phrases. Another difference in the version was the length of verses. Some verses gave more detail than other versions, which would appear to be more like Luke since he paid more attention to detail than others. In Acts 26: 9-18, it begins more so in verse twelve where Saul now Paul begins is sharing his conversion story to King Agrippa. Acts 22: 1-16, Saul begins to share his conversion to those that would listen. The major difference between the two stories being told was that Acts chapter twenty-six had a larger amount of verses written in red as what Jesus was saying.

One challenge with Acts is the difficulty of discovering any sources used by the author.²⁷ Marshall also stated, “The general view is that Luke has successfully managed to conceal whatever sources he used beneath a uniform editorial style.”²⁸ If, however, one is to appreciate fully the significance of these larger structures, it is essential to have

²⁶ Miller, *The Complete Guide to the Bible*, 366.

²⁷ Marshall, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, 37.

²⁸ Marshall, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, 37.

some understanding and appreciation of the overall purpose and structure of Acts.²⁹

Based on translators, Saul continued to yell out murderous threats, it was not a one-time occurrence Saul was consistent with his desire to destroy the Christians, disciples of “the Way.” The Sanhedrin Council was dedicated to getting the disciples of “the Way” out of town. They were stuck with the idea that what the Christians were saying were not true. Multiple faith leaders dedicated to getting these individuals who were speaking the so-called truth out of the way. The last thing the faith leaders wanted was persons discounting them as fake or as false prophets. The disciples were making the other faith leaders look unbelievable. Word was getting around that God’s love was for all and that the king of the Jews was crucified and was raised from the dead. Not to mention that they could have possibly crucified the wrong man.

The text begins by stating that Saul was breathing out words of threats and murder, which suggest that Saul had evil in his heart. The story goes on to share how Saul went to the High Priest for permission to gather the disciples of Christ and bring them back and kill them all. Saul got the letters needed to go to Damascus along with his companions. Scholars do not speak to how the companions felt about killing Christians or about following Saul. As Saul was nearing Damascus a light flashed, in other versions it said it was shined or was shone. Damascus was the capital city of Aram strategically located along ancient transportation routes.³⁰ Theologians debate if he was riding on a horse or walking. It is possible that Saul was riding on a horse because horses were used

²⁹ Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator’s Handbook on the Acts of the Apostles* (London, UK: United Bible Societies, 1972), 2.

³⁰ John A. Beck, *The Baker Book of Bible Charts, Maps, and Timelines* (Grand Rapids, MI: Bakerbooks, 2016), 37.

to exert power and authority and was generally rode during times of war. A travel to Damascus would make a long trip. In addition, they were trying to catch the disciples which would mean that they were traveling by horse. It is surprising that no one suggested that the killer of Christians did not ride on a donkey or camel. For a donkey like Balaam in Numbers 22 represented royalty or society blessings as well as spiritual ignorance. Neither did they mention riding on a camel which would represent intellect of a society. Surely, Saul was not going to walk to Damascus and then walk the disciples of Christ back to Jerusalem. Damascus was 150 miles away from Jerusalem and in a different Province of the Roman Empire.³¹ Jerusalem the city where Jesus was crucified and raised to life, and the city that anticipates his return in glory, the political capital of Israel, the religious center of Judaism, home of the ark and the Lord's temple.³² Evidently, the Syrian Jews were permitted by government of Damascus to arrest any Jews from Jerusalem who were accused of breaking the law and return them to their native land for trial and punishment.³³ The text says he was thrown or fell to the ground due to the light.

Another interesting dimension of this text is the explanation of how the companions of Saul did not hear what Jesus was asking Saul. My question of the text is if they did not hear Jesus, did they hear Saul talking or even understand what he was saying to Jesus? Why were they not blinded by the light, heard Jesus' voice or even moved to follow Jesus? But the underlying Greek constructions differ in such a way as to

³¹ William R. Cannon, *The Book of Acts* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1989), 53.

³² Beck, *The Baker Book of Bible Charts, Maps, and Timelines*, 38.

³³ Cannon, *The Book of Acts*, 53.

suggest that in Acts 9:7 the companions heard his voice as a sound, and that in Acts 22:9 they do not hear it as meaningful words³⁴ Clearly Saul never was a follower of Christ. Why were the companions not blinded? The story reminds me of Jonah. The Lord was not working to get the attention of the crew but of Noah. The storm that they were in was because of the call for Noah. Likewise, there is a call for Saul and the companions were caught in the middle of it all. Like Jonah being stuck in the belly of the fish for three days, Saul was blinded for three days. Jesus was dead and buried and on the third day; he day got up. On the third day Jonah was released and Saul regained his sight.

Saul was on his way to Damascus to kill and persecute Christians; and yet, he never made it to that city. Damascus was a city of refuge for the people of God. Saul's agenda got turned around when he heard the voice of God. While examining this story, Saul's experience was similar to so many other people called by God. Like Samuel God called his name twice and he responded after being instructed. Like Esther, she was an outsider who was given a right to be a part of royalty Saul was from Tarsus; but others treated him as if he was born and bred a citizen of Rome.

Luke creatively presents a text about forgiveness, obedience acceptance. God called on Ananias to see about Saul. Although Ananias struggled and grappled with the idea that the Lord wanted him to see about Saul, the Christian killer; he still followed the instructions of God. Once again there remains remnants of Luke's creative and insightful writing. He was well versed in the Hebrew and Greek, which brings about the story of Jonah. The difference is that Ananias went to Saul without regret of judgment and Jonah went to Nineveh in hopes that they all would be destroyed. Keeping in mind from a

³⁴ Robert H. Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 307.

historical perspective, Nineveh fought against Jonah's people and Saul persecuted Christians so both Jonah and Ananias had something in common. The difference is that Ananias followed the will of God with no regret or clarity as to why he needed to obey God. Saul heard the voice of God and decided to obey as well. It was not until Jesus called his name that he stopped in his tracks. After reading the text, Saul was struggling with internal turmoil that controlled his life and directed him to oppress others with his evil deeds and words of destruction. Saul struggled with a few unaddressed concerns in his life.

The first concern that Saul struggled with was self-identity. There were concerns about his origin. Saul was from Tarsus but how did he come into becoming a citizen of Rome. The question is regarding Saul's family's citizenship. Was Saul's father always a citizen or did he buy, or did he work to gain his citizenship? Another concern is that Saul did not have a great looking appearance. Saul had a unibrow and we all know what it means to be an outcast. Saul's decision to treat Christians with so much hatred could be the result of children talking about him and his unibrow. Saul was probably the punch line of all the jokes. It is rare that someone would have a unibrow; anyone with any abnormality of unusual physical appearance was a social outcast. No dates, no girlfriends or no wife. Saul was probably alone.

I believe Saul was trying to keep the attention off of him. He wanted to put all of the attention on the Christians so that no one would focus on how he looked or where he was from. Saul needed everyone to believe that he was like everyone else and was no different than the average person. Saul also needed to prove that he was more than just an average man. Saul needed to prove that he was special. Saul never married or had

children which could imply that he was lonely. He does not mention a wife in his epistles; but since bachelorhood was rare among Jews, some have surmised that he lived as a widower.³⁵ With Saul's question of origin, odd physical appearance and loneliness brought Saul to a place of torment and dissatisfaction within himself. As a result, Saul kept the attention off of himself and put it on the Christians. Saul kept focusing on the Christians and kept everyone else's focus on them by consistently yelling threats. Can you imagine what you would be thinking about if all everyone else did was yell "fake news" or kill those Christians? The disciples did not stand a chance with getting out of the city quietly because Saul was determined to put the attention on them and keep all eyes off of him. It is like someone yelling fire and everyone begins looking for the fire instead of the one yelling fire. From Acts of the Apostles, we learn other details about Paul's social standing which Paul himself does not mention, chiefly that he was a citizen of the city of Tarsus in southeastern Asia Minor and a Roman citizen as well.³⁶ Saul also struggles with his own identity. How his father had obtained Roman citizenship whether through purchase, service to the state, or some other means we do not know.³⁷ Most of his young manhood Saul spent in Jerusalem where he studied under the famous rabbi Gamaliel Acts 22:3.³⁸

Saul never discussed himself as an individual. He only focused on the needs of the council and Jerusalem; he never discussed his family and where he was from. Saul hid behind his position of power to prove that he had a place in society. Again, Saul

³⁵ Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament*, 307.

³⁶ Osiek, *What Are They Saying About the Social Setting of the New Testament*, 59.

³⁷ Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament*, 307.

³⁸ Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament*, 307.

wanted to keep everyone's attention off of him and on Christians so that others would not pay attention to the flaws that existed in his life.

Secondly, because Saul was always alone and dissatisfied with self; it is plausible that he set out to become a people pleaser. Saul was seeking to please the Sanhedrin Council and all of its merry band of Jesus haters. (He was doing this against the disciples).

Saul needed the approval of all. He needed to win the crowd. Winning the crowd was Saul's focus. Paul was a man of the Greco-Roman world, a native Greek speaker, a Hellenistic Jew. His rabbinic education brought him into direct contact with the literary and theological sources of his faith.³⁹ He won the crowd by yelling murderous thoughts and chasing the Christians out of the city. Based on the text it states that he was breathing out these threats and murderous thoughts. Which implies that this was all he thought about or talked about. He talked about it so that the High Priest gave him permission through the letters to go after the Christians in Damascus. It is interesting that not even the High Priest went after the Christians like Saul did. Saul was dead set on killing them. The stoning of Stephen triggers a persecution in Jerusalem of believing Jews by unbelieving ones, led by Saul.⁴⁰ Saul was willing to do whatever it took to win the trust and favor of the people. One of the best ways to gain social advancement and preference was to ingratiate oneself with a powerful person from whom generosity one hoped to benefit.⁴¹ Saul sought to please the people. The age-old Sunday School

³⁹ Osiek, *What Are They Saying About the Social Setting of the New Testament*, 52-53.

⁴⁰ Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament*, 306.

⁴¹ Osiek, *What Are They Saying About the Social Setting of the New Testament*, 56-57.

scripture comes to mind, “Study to show thyself approved unto God a workman that needed not be ashamed rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). I believe that Saul was looking for approval but not from God. Also keeping in mind that Saul was a man of intellect. Saul understood what it meant to have celebrity status. A high status in society includes power, women, respect and loyalty from followers. Saul had a plan and he was determined to execute that plan using Christians as collateral damage. Saul’s dependence is proof that he had no true knowledge to the power, purpose and authority of God.

Saul was delusional concerning the will of God. The final internal turmoil that Saul was left to face was his lack of knowledge of God. Saul was under the impression that he was persecuting the Christians on behalf of God. It is clear that he had no knowledge or reference to God. Saul never knew the voice of God. He asked who is this? when Jesus spoke to him. The scripture states that my sheep hear and know my voice. He did not recognize Jesus’ voice. Saul was a killer. We must never forget that fact. He killed in the name of righteousness, and he wanted legal permission to do so.⁴² He never had a connection to the master. Saul was so caught up in pleasing the Sanhedrin Council, he was unaware that he was deflecting his feelings on to others.

Saul was not comfortable in his own skin; he was far from knowing or understanding God. Saul had training by Gamaliel at the university, but does that mean he knew God? Intellect does not equate to knowing God in his fullness. Moses was a well-educated man; but it still required the encounter with the burning bush to personally discover God. The wise men despite their scientific education and experience with the

⁴² Willie James Jennings, *Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible Acts* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017), 90.

knowledge of the stars still needed a star to guide them to baby Jesus. Kings from the beginning of the reign of kings still could not get enough people to interpret their dreams and visions. It took them reaching out to someone who was locked up, thrown away and imprisoned or slaved to lead them to a miraculous God that ultimately everyone e recognized through the powerful acts of God. When you look at Saul on the road, you see a very zealous man who actually thought he was doing God a service by persecuting the church.⁴³ In spite of his great learning, Saul was spiritually blind and did not understand what the Old Testament really taught about the Messiah.⁴⁴ Maddox paints for us a clear picture of Saul's inner conflict. Maddox states, "The picture is one of a terribly restless spirit knowing that something was drastically wrong in his life, but unable or unwilling to admit the reality or cause of the disorientation."⁴⁵ Maddox also suggests that Saul was challenged to keep from exploding from his inner pressure.⁴⁶

The main question is, did the companions ultimately give their life to God? The text never said. In reflection the reality is that we will not get it until we are in the right place in our lives to receive what God has for us. Which makes sense why God holds the desires of our hearts from us until we get to the place where he wants us to be in our lives.

In conclusion, Saul was oppressive. He set out to persecute and kill Christians all for the glory of himself. He was determined to satisfy the lust of flesh and pain so that he

⁴³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary the Complete New Testament*, vol. 1 (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2007), 350.

⁴⁴ Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary*, 350-351.

⁴⁵ Robert L. Maddox Jr., *Layman's Bible Book Commentary Acts*, vol. 19 (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1979), 58.

⁴⁶ Maddox Jr., *Layman's Bible Book Commentary Acts*, 58.

could satisfy something within that could never be embraced until he recognized and identified the hurt.

When Saul lost his sight, Jesus instructed him to go to Damascus and stay in the house of Judas. He was guided by his companions. They did not possess the hatred for the Children of God that Saul did, because they did not even fight or debate where to take him. As Saul was there, he had an opportunity to reflect on what was happening in his life. Saul was operating in spiritual darkness and was headed toward destruction. Saul was without sight, food, or drink for three days. It is as if he was dead. The lack of food and water for many is like being dead because one is not getting nourishment. All of Saul's life he had been operating in darkness and on the road to Damascus he seen a light that blinded him for three days.

Ananias came to the street called straight, which is where Saul was located. A street that metaphorically spoke to what happened to Saul, he was made spiritually straight. Ananias touched his eyes and the text said that scale like substance came off of his eye and his sight was restored. Searching for the word scale refers to fish like scales. The fish like scales speak to the power of God. The road that Saul was on was not near a lake or river; but it was dry land nevertheless a fish like scale covers your eyes after seeing a bright light. In reflection, I wondered why fish scales would be used to cover Saul's eyes. I have not seen research or commentary it was not until I reached this conclusion. I was led to conclude that God used the fish scales to cover his eyes to protect Saul from seeing God's glory Exodus 33:20. God was protecting Saul. I also believe that the companions were not close. Saul had his own agenda and motivation. I believe that Saul was too far ahead and that would explain the reason why the companions did not

hear God. I do not pretend that I know the exact reason, this the explanation that was revealed unto me.

Saul was troubled by the inner struggle within. First, he battled with his own insecurities as a result people experienced Saul's deflection. Secondly, he struggled with his need to please and win the hearts of others which speaks to Saul's dependence. Finally, we witnessed Saul's delusion of the will of God. Saul was clueless as to who God was and currently remains to be in the world.

In the closing of this text, Saul gained his eyesight and when he gained his sight; he gained several other things. First, God accepted him into the family and gave him purpose and a new purpose on life. Secondly, he was resurrected as a new person as one is from being baptized, which he physically played out after he ate and gained strength. Finally, he was accepted by God and those that dwelled in Damascus as he stayed several days with the other Christians. The text no longer speaks of the remaining companions. The blessing is that when God is allowed to operate in our lives, we no longer have to walk in darkness due to lack of self-awareness. God will reveal all unto us as he did with Saul which was how he was able to realize that he was persecuting the wrong people. Lack of self-awareness brings about negative and oppressive behavior. There is a danger in being blind to our own internal issues. A lack of self-awareness can destroy us, physically, emotionally and spiritually. If we decide to remain ignorant to our inner struggles, we will remain in bondage by the prince of darkness. I believe that it in these periods of darkness that allows his light to shine so that we can chose a different path beyond the one we are headed down when we function on the negative images and ideas in our minds and hearts.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

A difficult word to say or mention to others is oppression. A word not favorably chosen to include in one's personal or ethnic history. Oppression is an act performed in a cruel way to keep one under another's rule. Oppression is a practice that has been conducted across the world and traumatized and destroyed many lives. Oppression is a method in which many have intentionally and unintentionally become a lifestyle. I cannot imagine how mental health has been impacted and if there are enough therapist around to support the brokenness of those who sat under the whip mental anguish brought on by those masters of oppression. When thinking about oppression I do not limit myself to just slavery of African Americans. I think about any and all persons who have been oppressed by someone or a group of people.

The oppression of children, women, black men, gays, lesbians, entertainers, slaves, religious or cultic organizations, country and students and many others. Oppressors could consist of parents, teachers, faith leaders, supervisors, coaches, politicians, creditors and the list go on. Oppressors are believed to operate with a dominating mindset because of their own experiences. Oppression is not only done by people, behavior and experiences can become oppressive as well. Negative behavior can traumatize oneself and those around them and cause them to feel oppressed. This becomes problematic when the person who has been traumatized by negative behavior

does not recognize, identify or acknowledge how negative behavior has oppressed them mentally or emotionally. The oppressor in this case is in disbelief when the person who has been oppressed for so long says enough and brings the oppressive behavior to their attention. The oppressor is surprised and believes in their heart that they are not oppressors. Those authoritarians have dictated so long they no longer view what they are doing as wrong but as something that is natural and normalized. Observe an oppressive exhibiting negative behavior is not complete without the experience.

The negative experience binds one in chains and makes them captive to oppression. An oppressed person can either seek freedom from their oppressor or remain consumed by them. A depleted self and hope of deliverance prevents one from becoming aware of their prison of oppression. As I go through my project, I will examine the impact of negative behavior and explore how it influences and inform how we interact with those around us. My hope will be to unveil the urgency of finding safe spaces where negative behavior can be unmasked, identified and managed.

Oppressive behavior is not a phrase of preference for many. I use it to identify and acknowledge its negative impact and influence on the world. Historically, documented oppression fills the pages of our history books. Africans, Jews, lesbians and gays and women. This chapter is not purposed to compare whose oppression was the greatest but to explore the strike against healthy, equal and productive lifestyles that promotes purpose. Ultimately, we face a major problem, there is a lack of awareness that leads to oppressive and unhealthy behavior of self and others.

The traumatic experiences being referenced are not always as obvious and clear to pinpoint. Nevertheless, it is happening all over the world. The Womanist Suffrage

Movement in 1848 was a time woman banded together to attain equal rights to vote as men. A century of battle to gain a right to impact national change. Oppressive behavior has a tendency of tearing people down mentally and emotionally. It is impossible for a nation or group of people to grow strong when a portion of the body is attacking another. In Dana Greene's book *Suffrage and Religious Principle: Speeches and Writings of Olympia Brown* she states, "The prosperity of a nation depends on the patriotism of the people. When patriotism declines, national hope declines."¹ How then can one feel empowered when an individual or group of people are oppressed by negative behavior? Greene also states, "The reason why women are underpaid, and their work undervalued is not because they are women, but because they are disfranchised."² In order to understand the reasoning behind men preventing women from voting would have to be explored. Thus, the result examining the Baptist Church and why women are unfairly treated and oppressed with negative and unhealthy behavior.

In this historical foundations chapter, I hope to engage scholars and historians as we reflect on unhealthy behavior in the Baptist church, the Black Baptist church and the unhealthy behavior of women in the Black Baptist church. We will possibly discover that trauma has occurred throughout the history of the church and because it has gone on so long, we are unaware of its long-lasting effects. These long-lasting effects have become normalized in the black Baptist community.

While serving in the Baptist church, I have served in the associations, local, state and national Baptist conventions. In my service of multiple conventions, I have

¹ Dana Greene, *Sufferage and Religious Principle: Speeches and Writings of Olympia Brown* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1983), 109.

² Greene, *Sufferage and Religious Principle*, 110.

witnessed the battles between churches, pastors and convention leaders. The Baptist Church has accomplished a lot in the history. There is so much that we can be doing for God and the community. The challenge is that there is an extraordinary lacking self-awareness. Individuals and churches seem to be caught up in money, power and glory. These filters are so embedded in our sight that we are clueless to what we are lacking in ministry. This filter can be attributed to the forepersons of our history of the Baptist Church. The challenges of the Baptist faith are not limited to black Baptist it also trickles down from the history of all Baptist.

Baptist tradition has been mocked and talked about for centuries. It could be said that Baptist are feared, misunderstood and exclusive. My experience as a Baptist minister has been quite similar. In research there are a limited number of books concerning Baptist history. Baptist history has not always been clear neither has the history been consistent in history books especially as it relates to the when it all began. Edward T. Hiscox in his book *Principles and Practices for Baptist Churches* states, “Baptist make no pretense of establishing by documentary evidence, an unbroken succession of churches in form and name, as now existing, extending back to apostolic times,”³ Hiscox embraced the Baptist history by looking beyond a chronicled history and focuses on who we are in our faith. Hiscox claims, “Baptists trace their lineage, not through corporate designations, or forms of organic life, but by principles avowed, maintained and defended.”⁴

³ Edward T. Hiscox, *Principles and Practices for Baptist Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1980), 494.

⁴ Hiscox, *Principles and Practices for Baptist Churches*, 495.

Hiscox answers the question who was the first Baptist by stating, “They commenced with John the Baptist, or Jesus Christ the Head of the Church. And the first of their faith were His disciples, constituting the primitive churches.”⁵ The Baptist has been for centuries disrespected, disregarded and mistreated by papal and protestants alike. Baptist has experienced ridicule and unhealthy behavior by people of faith. Hiscox shared that there were prevailing and dominate secularized churches that stigmatized Baptist as heretics along with defaming and persecuting them.⁶ Hiscox gave multiple examples of forms of oppression that Baptist endured. Hiscox has conducted a beautiful orchestra of events in the life of baptistdom. He appeared to have provided a collection of histories involving various forms of the Baptist tradition.

Hiscox points out that Baptist were considered heretics because they differed from the majority and had conscience and courage to defend the faith even if it took their lives.⁷ Hiscox describes the unhealthy behavior displayed by fellow Christians, he list emperors, kings, and princes, popes, priests and people, senates, synods, and councils as the oppressors that pursued the Baptist with the intent to exterminate them form the face of the earth.⁸ Hiscox states that the history of the American Baptist runs back a little more than two and a quarter centuries. They were cradled and nurtured by the hatred of their foes.⁹ Rodger Williams, a distinguished and an honored name, was identified with

⁵ Hiscox, *Principles and Practices for Baptist Churches*, 494.

⁶ Hiscox, *Principles and Practices for Baptist Churches*, 496.

⁷ Hiscox, *Principles and Practices for Baptist Churches*, 496.

⁸ Hiscox, *Principles and Practices for Baptist Churches*, 497.

⁹ Hiscox, *Principles and Practices for Baptist Churches*, 512.

the rise of the denomination in America according to Hiscox.¹⁰ As we examine the history of the Baptist, we are faced with the reality of their traumatization in the beginning. Hiscox points out the value of exploring all the stages of the Baptist development. This history teaches that if you are different than the majority you are considered a problem and made an outcast.

Examination of the Baptist history makes it easy to understand where discrimination and cruelty could have derived from in our faith tradition. Prompting us to place a magnifying glass on the history of the Black Baptist church. As we review the history of the Black Baptist Church, we can anticipate seeing forms of oppression through unhealthy behavior. Baptist has always been known for the emphasis on growing in faith, history has only been more of an oral tradition than a written one. The Atlanta Missionary Baptist Association (AMBA) in Baptist Alive states, “One of the functions of any good association is to offer quality instruction for the development of our faith).”¹¹ As we reflect on the history of Black Baptist, it would be imperative to remember the intentionality of those in Baptist history.

James Melvin Washington in his book, *Frustrated Fellowship: The Quest for Social Power* writes, “White society tried to erase slave memories of Africa, reduce slaves to the status of dependent children, and often tried to argue that they did not have souls.”¹² A traumatizing story to keep blacks oppressed with no hope or deliverance in sight.

¹⁰ Hiscox, *Principles and Practices for Baptist Churches*, 512.

¹¹ Atlanta Missionary Baptist Association, *Baptist Alive* (East Point, GA: East Point Printing, 2004), 60.

¹² James Melvin Washington, *Frustrated Fellowship the Quest for Social Power* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), xi.

Leroy Fitts in his book, *A History of Black Baptist* gives great clarity concerning the history of black Baptist. Fitts affirms that black Baptist has something and belongs to a faith tradition that has a rich, powerful, oppressive and courageous faith ever documented, lived and survived when he said, “All Christians share in the great spiritual heritage of the ages. This especially true of black Baptist in America.”¹³

Fitts bring about extraordinary views of the black Baptist faith. Fitts declares, “Our black Baptist heritage will be more meaningful for us if we try to explore the riches of our spiritual inheritance from its European background, American slavery, and the great white body of white American Baptist history.”¹⁴ Fitts further adds that there is an indebtedness to the Baptist of Europe and early American history due to the organizations and polity that was borrowed from Baptist of all ages.¹⁵ Black Baptist are not necessarily indebted to the Baptist of Europe due to fact that some of those Baptist brought the oppressive behavior of their enemies to America and only reenacted what was done to them. However, it is a valid point that understanding the history is important and valuable, especially now that we are observing history of unhealthy behavior in the black Baptist church.

European Baptist and black Baptist history’s commonality consist of unclear origin and understanding of history. Fitts suggest that the origin and black Baptist has always been in controversy.¹⁶ He continues to say, “Church historians of the nineteenth century and some thinkers of the twentieth century have held the theory that Baptist’s

¹³ Leroy Fitts, *A History of Black Baptist* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1985), 19.

¹⁴ Fitts, *A History of Black Baptist*, 19.

¹⁵ Fitts, *A History of Black Baptist*, 19.

¹⁶ Fitts, *A History of Black Baptist*, 19.

origin evolved from the remotest ages of antiquity.”¹⁷ Many of the scholars have noted that Baptist have set themselves apart from what we believe regarding the autonomy of the church. Fitts noted, “The Anabaptist, a sectarian expression of Christianity paralleled the Protest Reformation. This movement emphasized believer’s baptism and the autonomy of each local congregation.”¹⁸ Like Hiscox, Fitts confirms for us the history of Baptist.

...the Anabaptist movement was the antecedent movement of the Baptists. The emergence of the Anabaptist movement went severely against the grain of religious, social and political opinion in Europe. In England, it posed a tremendous threat to the church of England; and, in continental Europe, the Anabaptist movement was bitterly resisted by the established religious tradition and political authorities... The whole way of life of the Europeans was challenged by this new radical movement. The result was a severe era of persecution. Many Christians of Anabaptist persuasion were forced to leave Europe in search of a more congenial climate for their movement.¹⁹

Hiscox and Fitts paints a clearer picture of the birth and development of the Baptist denomination. Hiscox states, “For the first hundred years of Baptist history in America their growth was slow. The population was small and scattered.”²⁰ Fitts asserts, “The little group of newly baptized believers styled themselves Baptists and organized the first Baptist church on the continent of North America.”²¹ Roger Williams, an acknowledged Puritan preacher, was excommunicated from England and his faith community. Roger believed in something far greater than what was being practiced. His faith journey catapulted him to think beyond the normalized faith practice, as a result he experienced

¹⁷ Fitts, *A History of Black Baptist*, 19.

¹⁸ Fitts, *A History of Black Baptist*, 21.

¹⁹ Fitts, *A History of Black Baptist*, 22.

²⁰ Hiscox, *Principles and Practices for Baptist Churches*, 514.

²¹ Fitts, *A History of Black Baptist*, 23.

persecution along with those that believed as he did. Fitts, writes, “Roger Williams was driven from England by those persecutions of opinions which, like the confusion of languages at Babel, drove men asunder and peopled the earth.”²² Again, we are led to explore the questions as to how Baptist supported slavery. Fitts ask the question, “How could a group so exposed to persecution in Europe support the oppression of black men and women from Africa?”²³ Fitts question concerning how one who has been persecuted and oppressed, yet the oppressed, in turn, oppress another. It only makes sense that it had become a learned and normalized behavior.

The most interesting dynamic is the desire to keep persons who were different away from everyone else. Discrimination, persecution exclusion did not just start or remain in New England. This disease called oppression was already throughout the world. Fitts shows us that there were people who did not know how to deal with others unlike themselves, “There were many moderate white Baptist who sought to preserve the union by preventing any discussions of slavery in national meetings of Baptists.”²⁴ Fitts acknowledged that there were black Baptist leaders who became aware of the need to have separate churches from whites before the issue of slavery came up between white Baptist.²⁵

Blacks were further traumatized, not only due to slavery, but by the exclusion of the gospel. Some white Baptist had an issue with sharing faith with the slaves. Fitts states, “...the evolution of plantation missions began as independent slave plantation

²² Fitts, *A History of Black Baptist*, 23.

²³ Fitts, *A History of Black Baptist*, 24.

²⁴ Fitts, *A History of Black Baptist*, 28.

²⁵ Fitts, *A History of Black Baptist*, 30.

owners were very reluctant to permit an evangelistic program with the utilization of black Baptist preachers.”²⁶ Despite what some white Baptist believed, there were other white Baptist who believed the opposite and thought that blacks should hear the faith being shared among one another. Fitts wrote, “In North Carolina the first black preacher to receive permission to evangelize his race was “Uncle Harry Cowan.”²⁷ Black preachers over time has always been recognized for their power and gift of influence, especially when preaching the gospel. Their ability to move others with their passion and emotion changed the direction of history. Fitts noted that slave owner Thomas L. Cowan was so moved by Harry Cowan’s preaching that he gave him “privilege papers” to preach at his other plantations, later to other slave owners plantations with protection and during the Civil War when General Stonewall Jackson fell in battle he preached every night.²⁸

Despite that individuals like Rev. Cowan and other black preachers were so effective as Fitts has described they still were granted the opportunity to have what other white Baptist had, a place of worship. Fitts continue to explain, “Generally black slaves were not permitted to have their own churches, pastors, and preachers.”²⁹

As a result of the stipulations and exclusion experienced by blacks, blacks had to design or create opportunities of worship for themselves. These spaces were designed and purposed to hear the word without distractions of intimidation and oppressive factors. Fitts maintains that blacks went to the woods and cabins to have worship of their own and

²⁶ Fitts, *A History of Black Baptist*, 31.

²⁷ Fitts, *A History of Black Baptist*, 31.

²⁸ Fitts, *A History of Black Baptist*, 31.

²⁹ Fitts, *A History of Black Baptist*, 31.

believes that these actions led to the organization of black Baptist churches.³⁰ There continues to be multiple debates concerning how we began having worship on Sunday. It is possible that worship on Sunday was influenced by our experiences of the past. Fitts explains that slaves had to evade the patrols on duty since they needed written permission from their masters; as a result, they found themselves meeting on Sunday while their masters were sleeping during the morning.³¹ In the book, *Negro Baptist History U.S.A.*, by L.G. Jordan, he discusses how the Baptist in Virginia saw slavery as a “horrid evil.”³² After time some, white Baptist saw slavery as inhumane and unchristian. In addition, many of the white Baptist recognized the powerful preaching assigned to preach to other slaves and later other mixed congregations. Fitts believes that this was the beginning of independent black churches.³³ Fitts does lead us to some level of confusion as he shares a list of controversial statements concerning what church was first. However, Fitts does state with clarity that Jonathan Bryan permitted Andrew Bryan and other black Baptist to build a church on Bryan’s property at Yamacraw in Savannah, Georgia.³⁴

Despite the questionable history regarding who started the first Baptist church, history remains consistent concerning the traumatization and unhealthy behavior demonstrated to blacks. History also demonstrates how oppressive behavior experienced by Baptist in England and later passed down to those in America. History teaches that

³⁰ Fitts, *A History of Black Baptist*, 31.

³¹ Fitts, *A History of Black Baptist*, 32.

³² Lewis G. Jordan, *Negro Baptist History U. S. A.* (Nashville, TN: The Sunday School Publishing Board, N.B.C., 1750), 95.

³³ Fitts, *A History of Black Baptist*, 32.

³⁴ Fitts, *A History of Black Baptist*, 33.

Baptist endured oppression from people of faith, outsiders and one another. Survivors of this oppressive behavior was never identified as seeking help to deal with what they experienced over time. Neither was an apology or programs designed to end this inhumane practice of slavery. The truth of the Baptist faith suggest that it is not the faith that is inhumane, but it appears that individuals within the Baptist faith adopted oppressive practices. Baptist history also implies that their Baptist oppression continues to make a paradigm shift from generation to generation. Baptist has moved from being oppressed to oppressing blacks and now Baptist are continuing to oppress others in the Baptist faith, women.

The beauty in the Baptist faith has always been how the Baptist operated with associations, conventions and state meetings. Baptist has lost focus after blacks gained their freedom. The late Reverend Orlando K. Winters states, “During a time of crisis, an association can provide some sense of direction that will aid us in fulfilling our God-given destiny.”³⁵ Change can certainly occur through the association especially when it comes to embracing women in ministry. Often, we face the danger of listening to society and allowing societies practices to guide our decision making and behavior. The church should be mindful of what the world says however, we should not allow the wisdom of the world to guide us in our spiritual endeavors.

Society has dictated to one another the need to keep women at bay and exclude them from aiding men in making a difference in the world. Paulina W. Davis states in her book *National Women's Right Movement*, “We proclaimed that our work was to

³⁵ Atlanta Missionary Baptist Association, *Baptist Alive*, 71.

reform, and harmonize society; not to lay waste her homes and her sanctuaries.”³⁶

Society and history have viewed women in a variety of ways. It appears that the negative perceptions verbalized have influenced the Baptist church. Men, women and the Baptist denomination has embraced the negative views of black women in the church. Society has made women who desired more than just being spectators as villains. Sara Hunter Graham in her book *Woman Suffrage and the New Democracy* states, “Unmarried suffragist were categorized as man-hating fanatics who, if given the opportunity, would abolish the institute of marriage and destroy American family life.”³⁷ The feelings toward women was and is not specific to a particular race but all women. Graham points out, “Regardless of color, class or national origin, women were deemed political exiles, to be represented by their husbands if they were fortunate, and by no one if they were not.”³⁸ We should consider trauma negatively impacting others as Graham shared when she professed, “Suffragism in the early nineteen hundreds was burdened with an image arising from its history that was in many respects a hindrance to further progress.”³⁹

Lack of awareness of the traumatic events of our lives secretly moves in and traumatizes others not fully understanding its complete impact. Society operates and takes out its pain on others. Steven M. Buechler in his work *The Transformation of the Women Suffrage Movement: The Case of Illinois, 1850-1920* claims, “...while the United States was making the world safe for democracy, it was denying a political voice to its

³⁶ Paulina Davis, *History of the National Women's Rights Movement* (New York, NY: Source Book Press, 1871), 7.

³⁷ Sara Hunter Graham, *Woman Suffrage and the New Democracy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 14.

³⁸ Graham, *Woman Suffrage and the New Democracy*, 19.

³⁹ Graham, *Woman Suffrage and the New Democracy*, 33.

female citizens.”⁴⁰ The Baptist has found themselves imitating the practices of those in the abolitionist movement, Buechler believes, “In the process, male objection to female participation raised the issue of gender, and in response women had to address this alongside of before the original set of issues.”⁴¹ Issues of equality continues to plague the Baptist church and our society. According to Buechler, it took seventy years for women to attain a right to vote and the suffrage movement involved many conflicts; and therefore, changed the direction of the movement.⁴² In reading Buechler’s work, he did not name, in specific details, the many interests and conflicts that the suffrage movement affected. Especially, as it relates to the church, not just Baptist but all faiths. In the book *Anti-Suffrage: Ten Good Reasons* by Grace Duffield Goodwin states, “We admit that individuals and groups under existing conditions frequently endure injustice; women in the industrial world, as a group or class, suffer under heavy wrongs; individuals who own property and pay taxes with no voice in public matters suffer a form of injustice.”⁴³

Lisa Nikol Nealy, author of *African American Women Voters* acknowledges, “One of the major problems of studying African American women’s progressive political action and participation is the failure of most white political scientist to connect religiosity with political consciousness and action of African American women.”⁴⁴ Nealy

⁴⁰ Steven M. Buechler, *The Transformation of the Woman Suffrage Movement* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 19.

⁴¹ Buechler, *The Transformation of the Woman Suffrage Movement*, 3.

⁴² Buechler, *The Transformation of the Woman Suffrage Movement*, 1.

⁴³ Grace Duffield Goodwin, *Anti-Suffrage: Ten Good Reasons* (New York, NY: Duffield and Company, 1913), 5.

⁴⁴ Lisa Nikol Nealy, *African American Women Voters* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2009), 3.

clearly and successfully proves in her book how overlooked the influence of African American women can be. The United States ultimately has dictated and modeled the practice of overlooking African American women. Nealy would agree, she states, “Focus group research on African American women’s religious practices and political consciousness is vastly unexplored in American Politics.”⁴⁵ Nealy does an extraordinary job in exploring the views of the African American women’s perspective unlike the other books regarding the suffragist and abolitionist movements. Nealy also does a thorough job with including the perspective and former roles of the African American Church. Unlike Dubois book, *The Religion of the Negro*, Dubois discusses the resource the church was to the community as Nealy does in her work, “In this regard the Black church provides a refuge from the frustration, denigration, and cruelty that interposed itself into black life.”⁴⁶ The church had multiple opportunities to remain a change agent for our country. Nealy would agree when she states, “If the church wants to transmit political messages, it has the apparatus to do so with great efficiency.”⁴⁷

The African American church has always had some connection to politics and areas of advancement. “By virtue of participating in a social network, the church member may encounter messages about political issues and interact with fellow members who adhere to the church’s line.”⁴⁸ Dana Greene reminds us of when Olympia Brown raising the question, “Why should the church advocate women’s suffrage? Because it cannot do its full work for Christ while more than half of its members have no votes and

⁴⁵ Nealy, *African American Women Voters*, 5.

⁴⁶ Nealy, *African American Women Voters*, 41.

⁴⁷ Nealy, *African American Women Voters*, 41.

⁴⁸ Nealy, *African American Women Voters*, 41.

are mere silent partners.”⁴⁹ Throughout history we have seen the negative behavior of others and how it has continued to spread through the country and the world. This attitude of oppression crippled and divided church congregations. Greene added Olympia Brown’s thoughts when she mentioned, “Some clergymen have seen and noted this and have accordingly made a demand for a “mans church,” and some churches have sought to secure a certain measure of respectability for themselves by establishing men’s leagues within the church.”⁵⁰ As a church we cannot operate successfully with one dominate gender. Clearly, the church is filled with women and they make the most impact in the church. Again, Greene lifts up Brown’s declaration, “But a church of any other organization for Christian work without women would be an anomalous affair. Women from the very first have been the very life of the Church.”⁵¹

Despite the reality of slavery, African American men and other members of the congregation cannot be dismissed from practicing oppressive behavior toward women leaders in the church. Society pressures, attitudes, practices and experiences helped to shape how women felt about one another and how members of church adopted this unhealthy behavior and mindset. The Buhle’s recaptured France Wright’s words, “Wright railed against the submergence of woman in marriage as a violation of natural rights and challenged the institution of marriage on the ground that its circumscribed woman’s individualism, placing her outside true citizenship.”⁵²

⁴⁹ Dana Greene, *Suffrage and Religious Principle: Speeches and Writings of Olympia Brown* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1983), 143.

⁵⁰ Greene, *Suffrage and Religious Principle*, 141.

⁵¹ Greene, *Suffrage and Religious Principle*, 141.

⁵² Mari Jo Buhle and Paul Buhle, *The Concise History of Woman Suffrage* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 3.

Sadly, enough we are blind to the negative impact that we have on our churches when filled with division and oppressionistic behavior. C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya does an impressive job of understanding the views of churches regarding women in ministry. Lincoln and Mamiya discovers that some Baptist allows women to preach from the pulpit but does not allow them to carry out any of the ordinances or pastoral functions of the church.⁵³ Growing up in the African American community, women were taught to follow the directives of the male dominating figure. Women in the church were not permitted to preach and lead a church as Baptist. Many men and women have used the scriptures to justify their opposition to women in leadership. Lincoln and Mamiya point out that many of those that oppose women in leadership in the church used scripture to silence women like the absence of women among the twelve disciples or the Apostle Paul's instructions to keep women silent in the church.⁵⁴

At some level, it is possible that some men did not want women in leadership because of the change in roles with women. Black women were getting better paying jobs and leadership roles in the community over black men. Pickney explains in his book *Blackballed*, "More black women had entered the middle class than black men, because secretarial and clerical work, though considered white-collar jobs, were also thought of as occupation for women."⁵⁵ Black men have always found comfort and resolve in the leadership roles they held in the church, this was their Fortune 500 company. Pickney agrees, "Black America has fought back at certain times by embracing stereotypes and

⁵³ C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 293.

⁵⁴ Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 294.

⁵⁵ Darryl Pinkney, "Blackballed: The Black Vote and U. S. Democracy" (New York, NY: New York Review of Books, 2014), 79.

turning what have been regarded as cultural defects into cultural virtues.”⁵⁶ However, one flaw is oppression our own in order to maintain the control and power individuals could not attain in present day society. Not only are we oppressing others, but women are oppressing other women. Salvador Armando Macule and Sacrojini Nadar in *Women Oppressing Women, The Cultivation of Espirit de Corps in Xrilo (Women’s Association) of the UCCSA in Mozambique* claims, “Sexuality is an integral part of who we are as human beings. The fact that women encourage other women to deny this aspect of their humanity shows the ways in which women have been indoctrinated by patriarchy.”⁵⁷

Lincoln and Mamiya presents a different perspective, “While it seemed a curious phenomenon to have women clergy who strongly disapproved of women as pastors these women probably became ministers after their husbands’ deaths, often reluctantly taking over their ministries.”⁵⁸ For years, it has been understood that women were rejected by men, but these literature prove that it is not just the men that women have to battle but their own. Barbara Andolsen reviews a book by Marcia Y Riggs and Gloria H. Albrecht and she explores the specific moral dimensions of the ongoing struggle for the equality of women in the black church.⁵⁹

There is a great need for change in the black Baptist church. A need for a unified front versus a divided one. Negative behavior continues to intensify between one another

⁵⁶ Pinckney, “Blackballed,” 78.

⁵⁷ Salvador Armando Macule and Sarojini Nadar, *Women Oppressing Women: The Cultivation of Espirit de Corps in Xrilo (Women’s Association) of the UCCSA in Mozambique* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd, 2012), 359.

⁵⁸ Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 290.

⁵⁹ Barbara Andolsen, “Monmouth University Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics,” *Journal of the Society of Ethics* 25, no. 1 (2005): 249.

due to the fight of oppressionistic tendencies. Everyone in the fight for domination over the other. This action is only a continuation of what has always been. It appears that this lesson persists as a generational curse. Someone or all that know better should work collaboratively to end this monstrosity of behavior and mind set. Andolsen points to Marcia Y. Riggs' work *Plenty Good Room: Women Versus Male Power in the Black Church* and argues, "Riggs focus is on violations of gender justice within African American churches, exploring particular aspects of ministerial ethics. She is willing to take on perhaps the strongest institution in the African American community and demand that it fully recognizes women's equal dignity."⁶⁰ If the fight for domination continues in the church between genders, we will continue to drive others away.

As men we must collaborate with women to influence, educate and correct congregants on the power of God to use both women and men to preach and pastor God's people. Lincoln and Mamiya gives two examples, Rev. Dr. T. J. Jemison, former president of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., shares that he has no problem with women in ministry; however, he expresses how his father and other clergy are against it and will slowly come to accept women in ministry.⁶¹ Lincoln and Mamiya also shares the words of one the greatest and influential preachers of all time, former president of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc., and pastor of the largest Baptist Church in America, the late Rev. Dr. Gardner C. Taylor, he claims that at one point he

⁶⁰ Andolsen, "Monmouth University Journal," 249.

⁶¹ Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 297.

was against women in ministry and later realized that they too can be used in ministry as long as they have the proper training.⁶²

In conclusion, we can see how the lack of self-awareness can bring about an onslaught of unhealthy behavior among those that experience this oppressor like attitude and practice. Carl Jung said, “The healthy man does not torture others. Generally, it is the tortured who turn into torturers.”⁶³ The aim of this chapter was to explore the history of oppression and how it has caused a flood of unhealthy behavior to be exhibited in the history of the Baptist church. The lack of self-awareness has proven to be the pathway that oppression traveled through the course of the centuries.

The first objective was to show how oppression has existed in the life of the Baptist church. Based on findings, we discovered that the Baptist church was established upon the precipice of opposition. Baptist has only known oppression since the beginning of establishment. The second objective was to examine the history of the Black Church and seek out examples of unhealthy behavior. The history of oppression was passed on through the Baptist tradition. Oppression through slavery, worship and faith praxis and initial beginnings the black Baptist church. Literature does point out that in all the history of the Baptist church there are some spaces of uncertainty. The focus was more about living out faith and operating in a personal relationship with God.

The final objective was to investigate how the women in the black Baptist church was and continues to be oppressed by the members of the congregation. Unhealthy behavior did not just begin since the beginning of the black Baptist church, but it was

⁶² Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 296.

⁶³ "Criminal Minds, Season 1," Quotes.net, accessed October 17, 2020, <https://www.quotes.net/show-quote/18321>.

how the Baptist church began. Unhealthy behavior and the lack of self-awareness are co-laborers in the oppression and mental and emotional destruction of others. The oppression conducted by others were only expressions learned from past experiences. As a result, unhealthy behavior continues to be paramount to the life in the Baptist church.

The Suffrage Movement was used in this chapter to compare and help give clarity as to how men viewed women in our society. Throughout the literature, it was discovered that much of the Woman's Suffrage Movement literature found was limiting in relation to African American women and African American women in the church. The lack of inclusion of African American women and the church supports how white women only focused on them gaining equality. Statistics shared by Lincoln and Mamiya gave clarity to the reasoning behind why individuals did not support women in ministry or pastoring a church.

For years, women were not supported in ministry because spiritual leaders did not believe in women in leadership. Women were only going according to what was taught to them from slave masters and other persons in leadership operating out of the old state of oppressive affairs. These unhealthy and oppressive acts have only traumatized individuals and as a result they have traumatized others. If the Baptist church does not recognize her own pain, we will continue to destroy one another. We must address our hurt and face our oppressors in that trauma does not guide actions and thoughts, ultimately defeating trauma and managing its long term affects. Philosopher Kahlil Gibran penned, "Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars."⁶⁴ In order to understand the nature and lasting effects of

⁶⁴ "Criminal Minds, Season 1," Quotes.net, accessed October 17, 2020, <https://www.quotes.net/show-quote/18321>.

being traumatized by unhealthy behavior and oppression, one must explore trauma and its impact. I would like to believe that if persons understood the full gravity of trauma caused by the lack of self-awareness and unhealthy behavior healing can take place within individuals, the Baptist church and the community.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

There is a prolific danger in not knowing when you oppress others and yourself without knowing. Countless theologies can fill this chapter and we still not get to the real crux of the matter. Liberation, silence, narrative, storytelling, systematic and black theology are all great candidates for the theologies to be understood as it relates to this project.

When we examine Saul, there is clearly something within that is motivating him through manipulation to act on the thought of killing others. Something has occurred in his life that has unconsciously enslaved him and made him into one that believes he must capture others and imprison them by his hate. We all at some place in our lives would love to live under the umbrella of freedom and not drenched by the storms of oppression. The lack of self-awareness and the triggering of past traumatic experiences ensures a destiny of enslavement of some form for an individual, small group, organization or group of people.

This project focuses on individuals gaining healing through community after becoming aware of the traumatic events in one's life that has caused them to exhibit negative behavior to others. In order that one attains healing, they must be willing to become vulnerable, facing their pain, unaddressed or unidentified traumatic experience. Out of the multiple theologies mentioned above, womanist theology, is the only theology

that speaks to freedom for all. Womanist theology supports everyone, including the ones that have forgotten or dismissed them from varying movements. Womanist Theology is the most forgiving and progressive one.

For years, we have witnessed individuals use power, control and faith to persuade self and individuals to believe their truth. In this chapter, I will examine the current theological conditions in society. There is a great disparity in community related to faith and practice. It appears as if there is a misuse of faith and practice. Racism, classicism and sexism are traps used to lock persons into a prison of delusion. Additionally, themes related to the project will be explored. More specifically, how the lack of self-awareness leads to oppressive and negative behavior of self and to others will be explored. Social, economic political and religious power creates a divide between the necessary groups to prevent unity and a successful powerhouse from bringing down the original oppressors. Joan M. Martin suggest all these social policy issues and dynamics of race, gender, and class provide ample possibilities for collaborative work between womanist black male liberation, and white, Asian, Hispanic American and mujerista feminist theologians and ethicist.¹ A new consciousness developed amongst the oppressed against their unjust treatment. The basis of protest is generally based upon race, class or sex.² Many have considered the black church as the oppressors of women; however, womanist scholars have shown the oppression of women can be seen in the world of the interfaith and feminist thinking. This “Note” surveys recent Catholic ethical and theological

¹ Joan M. Martin, “From Womanist Theology to Womanist Ethics: The Contribution of Delores S. Williams,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 58, no. 3/4 (2004): 212.

² J. Deotis Roberts, “Liberation Theologies: Critical Essay,” *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 36, no. 1 (2010): 45-51, accessed October 15, 2020, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?>.

scholarship on the vexing issue of racism and the pursuit of racial justice.³ Feminist scholars have focused primarily on sexism as the heart of their theological discourse, while womanist scholars believe that the multiple oppressions of racisms, sexism, and classism must be considered as a whole, since they have affected the lives of many African American women.⁴ Womanist theology challenges one to think beyond sex but race and class. Womanist theology encourages blacks as a whole to look at everyone and partner to raise the consciousness of all. Kwok Pui-lan lifts up Delores' work as an example of partnerships that can support and impact womanist theology. She says the first concerns are the interpretation of racism and colorism in the global context.⁵ Pui-lan states in a recent theological conference, Stephen Ray commented that we should not see race only through the lens of racism, but as a critical category of how Europeans mapped and imagined the world in their construction of knowledge.⁶ Stephen Ray's comment was initially hard to embrace at the same time it gives clarity as to the thought patterns of oppressors.

Third World feminist theologians and womanist theologians have to learn from and collaborate in our common effort to fight for survival and quality of life for the world's Hagars and downtrodden people.⁷ Womanist theology uncovered not only the

³ Bryan N. Masingale, "Has the Silence Been Broken," *Catholic Theological Ethics and Racial Justice* 75, no. 1 (2014): 133-155.

⁴ Yolanda Y. Smith, "Womanist Theology: Empowering Black Women through Christian Education," *Black Theology: An International Journal*, April 21, 2015, accessed October 15, 2020, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1558/blth2008v6i2.200>.

⁵ Kwok Pui-lan, "Womanist Theology: Rooted in History and Open to Dialogue," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 58, no. 3/4 (2004): 195.

⁶ Pui-lan, "Womanist Theology," 196.

⁷ Pui-lan, "Womanist Theology," 196.

racism and sexism of white feminist and black liberation theologies, but also the deep inability of Western theology of dealing with otherness in a non-hegemonic way.⁸ It remains difficult to believe and understand the thoughts of those who look down upon other humans. Kwok points to Delores when she states, “She reminds us of the tragic history when black people were seen as belonging to a lower order of nature than white people, and black women were viewed” as beast, as cattle, as ‘articles ‘for sale.’”⁹ As a result of horrendous odor of sexism and classism, the church has become infected with the skewed understanding of how we should view one another in faith, sex and class. Both community and church organization reflect various degrees of independence, interdependence, and shared power or fragments of the dual-sex political systems of African familyhood.¹⁰ Early in their history, black women learned that America would not provide them the protection and privileges of the pedestal. Rather, racial oppression generated material conditions which reinforced economic independence and self-reliance.¹¹ Unfortunately, blacks have been blinded by the ignorance of the selfish and the evil. Black men against black women and black women against black women. Research demonstrates that this is a learned and experienced behavior. Gilkes suggest it is possible that the ambivalent nature of black male sexism and these fragments of African social organization represent the distinctive areas from which black women should seek to change the attitudes and ideologies of black men and develop positive

⁸ Gabriella Lettini, “Commitment to Otherness and Diversity,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 58, no. 3/4 (2004): 197-200.

⁹ Pui-lan, “Womanist Theology,” 196.

¹⁰ Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, “The Roles of Church and Community Mothers,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 57.

¹¹ Gilkes, “The Roles of Church,” 56.

alternatives for contemporary women.¹² Gilkes makes a great point, there needs to be a greater effort to explain and change the tainted thinking that black women are less than black men.

Black women have changed the scope of theology and modern day thinking. Black women have impacted and elevated preaching and theological reflection. In the context of late twentieth century racism and inequality, it is essential that there be a critical analysis of those internal community dynamics which will facilitate the development of women's leadership roles with the proud ideological and spiritual support of black men.¹³ Welch indicates that the structures of race, ethnicity, gender, economics, and culture assure that we can never be the same.¹⁴ Many are afraid of change and fear how change will impact their agenda or identity. Ananias went to Saul understanding that he would be seen as an outcast. Yet, he obeyed God when God told him to meet Saul. Yes, Saul was against the Christians.

For the project it is imperative to focus more on the idea that Saul was seen as an outcast as black women are viewed by whites and their counter parts, black men. Delores S. Williams says it best:

The immediate problem is this: white women may hold on to traditional, supportive alliances that are racist. Thus, racism becomes a conflict impeding the progress of Afro American and Anglo-American women struggling to create meaningful relations for independence and liberation. On the other hand, Afro-American women may hold on to traditional supportive alliances that are sexist. Sexism becomes an issue preventing women from coming together to establish relationships that yield independence and liberation. To deal with the problem, white women need to separate themselves from the power and social

¹² Gilkes, "The Roles of Church and Community Mothers," 59.

¹³ Gilkes, "The Roles of Church and Community Mothers," 59.

¹⁴ Sharon D. Welch, *A Feminist Ethic of Risk* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1990), 206.

authority given to the “white-is-right” myth. Black women, likewise, need to say “No” to forces in the black community contending that black male liberation is more important than female struggles for self-determination and self-esteem. When the black women say “yes” to this contention, they perpetuate sexism. Both need an ethic built upon moral, spiritual, and aesthetic principles redefined to be in deadly conflict with notions of good, beauty, God, right and wrong based on white supremacy and male superiority.¹⁵

Evans says it best when he quotes, “Black feminist theologian Jacquelyn Grant relates an account in which Richard Allen, founder of the AME Church, refused to recognize the legitimacy of the ministry black woman ... Though he was impressed with her considerable talents and sincerity, he would not ordain her, because (The AME) discipline ... did not call for women preachers.”¹⁶

Again, is it not just the Protestant churches that feeds into the mindset of racism, sexism and classism. Phelps recount the strides (and hurdles) towards liberation within the Catholic Church but laments the fact that black Catholics continue to suffer segregation. She claims that “Even today, African American Catholics are generally segregated within all Black parishes or marginalized in predominately white parishes.”¹⁷ Phelps concludes that Catholic “Church institutions still manifest patterns of racism, sexism, classism, which are destructive to African American Catholics and others.”¹⁸ Womanist theologians admonishes us all to take a stand and join them in the march for full equality. Womanist theologians have also made a statement on their own which is

¹⁵ Delores S. Williams, “Women’s Oppression and Lifeline Politics in Black Women’s Religious Narratives,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 1, no. 2 (Fall 1985): 51.

¹⁶ James H. Evans, “Black Theology and Black Feminism,” *Journal of Religious Thought* 38, no. 1 (1981): 48-53, 424.

¹⁷ Emilie M. Townes, *A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 174.

¹⁸ Townes, *A Troubling in My Soul*, 57.

“we are not waiting on men to liberate us, we are liberating ourselves.” Marcia Y. Riggs sketches the development of the Black Women’s Club Movement as a positive response to sex, race, and class discrimination.¹⁹

Under the current theological conditions, the misuse of faith and power does not stand alone. There are multiple theological themes that encircles this project. Unfortunately, this chapter is not purposed to handle all of the themes presented; however, the chapter will only scratch the surface of a few. Those themes consist of liberation, narrative and silence. They are all themes that connects themselves to womanist theology. A theology that fights and stands for freedom while supporting and understanding others narrative after having to live and serve in silence. This project leads us to a place where we can learn of the necessary fight for freedom and exiting the hand of oppression that seeks to keep individuals limited and in chains. The first theme is liberation; it can be hard to come by and it has been allusive to many. Liberation is a position we all believe we are fighting for but once achieved we oppress others.

Why do the oppressed oppress others? Many live under the falsehood of freedom and still oppress others with our views, words and behavior. Like Saul, he was under the oppression that he was operating in freedom when in fact the hate within him manipulated him into chasing and persecuting Christians. Williams continues to point out, Saul’s hate and persecution in fact resonated in the minds and hearts of many Christians resulting in others hating him and enforcing other’s negative response towards him.

¹⁹ Townes, *A Troubling in My Soul*, 57.

Saul's narrative gives clarity to his vicious and tactical assault on Christians. Countless individuals are seeking to be free from the chains that bind them. As individuals we must know, accept and embrace our own narrative that negatively or positively influences our thoughts, views and behavior. Biblical women, new visions by Clarice Martin, shares that Weems's invites readers to imagine with her how the women may have thought about themselves and the lives of other women.²⁰ The narrative is what informs us of who we are and what makes us who we are. Our current society has misplaced and forsaken the true intent to share stories. Martin points out that Weems' nine accounts of women whose stories are interwoven through the narrative traditions of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament highlights "the neglected and unexplored dimensions of their lives and relationships."²¹

Currently, stories are used to inform for the purpose of financial gain, stardom, social gain. Unlike the true intent which was for the purpose of informing to prevent failure, continue in faith, culture and practice. The passing down of stories was the vehicle for which the children of Israel was able to continue in worship and a functioning relationship with God. Through narratives, we can understand history and where we come from. The narratives are what empowers us and reinforces our stories of greatness and reasons of pain. It is the narratives that guides us to the truths of life and life's current humanistic state.

Many African American women have only been silent because they have been abducted by society, feet taped up with classism, hands bound by racism and mouth taped

²⁰ Clarice Martin, "Biblical Women: New Visions," *Christianity and Crisis*, March 19, 1990, 90.

²¹ Martin, "Biblical Women," 90.

with sexism. Individuals have chosen to stay silent about their stories of oppression. Silence has been a method of choice, place of safety and a forced condition. Silence has been chosen because shame introduces its presence. As shame attempts to tell the story of African American women womanist theology whispers words of empowerment in her ear and urges her to stand in her truth so that the world will learn of the behavior of humankind. Silenced has been forced on others in hope to keep others from finding out the truth and to continue in the evil work being performed to the oppressed. For some, they are suffering in silence because they are unaware of their pain. Others choose to be silent because they may not understand their role or their level of connectedness to the subject. As servant transformational leaders, we must seek to understand the silence experienced by many other women. Kathryn Bradford Heidelberger states, “in order to speak meaningfully about God, one must first begin in contemplation and silence.”²² Parents can agree that their children have chosen silence because they knew parents would over talk them and not hear their narrative regardless if they were right or wrong. Silence, for fear of not being heard or losing the ability to share the narrative, can be oppressive.

A truth for many men would consist of being silent for fear of being shamed or accepted by other male faith leaders and theologians. Kathryn lifts another point regarding silence, she suggests that Gustavo Gutierrez theological method and Endo’s novel shows the integral connection of not only the human life but of the very life of

²² Kathryn Bradford Heidelberger, “The Liberative Theology of Silence: Women in Theology,” 1, accessed November 22, 2019, <https://womenintheology.org/2016/11/23/the-liberative-theology-of-silence/>.

God.²³ From a lens of Liberation Theology Kathryn argues, “Reading silence is hard for Christians and non-Christians alike, because it cuts into some of our basic convictions about perseverance in the midst of suffering and the hope of promised reward for that perseverance.”²⁴ There are so many varying perspectives to silence, its power and meaning, observing and seeking to understand what it means to individuals become imperative. Kathryn believes, “Central to liberation theology is the belief in the preferential option for the poor. This preference does not exclude those who are not poor, but rather places the priority of God’s action among the cause of the poor and the oppressed.”²⁵

Stories have taught us that we are living in a divided place. The misuse of faith and the countless themes that negatively impact us creates a reservoir of defeat and division. Communities have chosen to work toward a unified community and nation. Sadly, there are persons who will continue the divide because they unconsciously live in darkness. The darkness that fills the earth is consistent with a limited mindset, limited experiences and limited equality. Womanist theology has shined a light into the crevices of oppression and magnified the reality of the many places’ oppression is taking place.

In a critical essay entitled “Liberation Theologies the Presidential Leadership at the Theological Seminary,” the writer shares, “Oppressions based upon race and class

²³ Heidelberg, “The Liberative Theology of Silence,” 1, accessed November 22, 2019, <https://womenintheology.org/2016/11/23/the-liberative-theology-of-silence/>.

²⁴ Heidelberg, “The Liberative Theology of Silence,” 1, accessed November 22, 2019, <https://womenintheology.org/2016/11/23/the-liberative-theology-of-silence/>.

²⁵ Heidelberg, “The Liberative Theology of Silence,” 1, accessed November 22, 2019, <https://womenintheology.org/2016/11/23/the-liberative-theology-of-silence/>.

involves the wholesale suffering of an entire people.”²⁶ Womanist theology has also taught the unnecessary evil of oppression and has challenged us all to stand against the multiple divisions that currently persist. Dr. Marsha Snulligan-Haney reminds us of what Dr. Jacquelyn Grants said in her work, *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response*, when she discovered the interactions and differentiations between womanist and feminist theologies.²⁷ A divided place is what our country has claimed as her identity, practice and behavior. A divided place is what we will continue to be if we chose to ignore the equality between white and black women, black men and women and equality for all humanity. A divided place would suggest that we chose to live as such because we are living in darkness, the veil of avoidance and ignorance covering over our eyes.

In the Roundtable Discussion: Racism in the Women's Movement it stresses, “Contemporary white women have failed to acknowledge the experiences of black women and have acted as though the experience of white middle-class women were the experience of all women.”²⁸ Haney points to Grants statement of clarity when she speaks, “Black Women's experience as the primary source for contextualizing biblical theology, the importance and universality of the spiritual dimensions of human beings are evidenced.”²⁹

²⁶ Roberts, “Liberation Theologies,” 45-87.

²⁷ Marsha Snulligan-Haney and Jacquelyn Grant, *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989), 264.

²⁸ Linda Mercadante et al., "Roundtable Discussion: Racism in the Women's Movement," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 4, no. 1 (1988): 93, accessed September 27, 2020, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25002072>.

²⁹ Snulligan-Haney and Grant, *White Women's Christ*, 264.

Saul gives us a clear example of what it looks like to live in darkness spiritually and physically. Spiritually, Saul was under the impression that he was doing the will of God until he was knocked down and God asked why he was “persecuting thou me” (Acts 9:4-6). Saul appeared speechless and immediately he was blinded and experienced what it was like to live in darkness through blindness. Like Saul, the world is living through darkness because we are living with a limited mindset and experiences.

A limited mindset is what keeps us from moving forward and growing together. We can choose to have a limited mindset because we fear what we do not understand. A limited mindset can be due to what we have been taught or exposed unto. A limited mindset is what prevents us from hearing and understanding the necessary stories that gives clarity and understanding to one’s truth and origin of oppression and captivity. The battle against oppression would be a greater one if white feminist and black men joined forces with womanist theologians to stand against racism, sexism and classism. There are also limited mindsets because of limited experiences.

What if Saul had taken the opportunity to interview the Christians before he persecuted them while having an unlimited mindset and experiences. There would be a strong possibility that he would not have sufficient evidence to persecute them at all? The limited experiences make it difficult to understand an individual or group of people. The experiences of African American men, women, white women and black women are all different. Unless you are either, it would be impossible to understand their full experience. The encounters of black men and women are different; and the experiences of white and black women are also different. Our commonalty of oppression would be consistent with one another.

Oppression is what should bring us together with the understanding that we have varying experiences. A variety of experiences should not be something that we compare and place values on but one that we listen to, understand, empathize and respond with a resounding voice and declaration that enough is enough. The practice of listening to stories informs us of other experiences and counteracts our unlimited knowledge of experiences. Many experiences we do not have to or desire to go through; however, we can choose to be exposed to other's experiences and work together to prevent negative experiences from happening to others. Limited mindsets and experiences should challenge us to understand what it means to be impacted by such restraints.

While attending seminary conversations filled the room related to why it was more than men that stood against women preachers. It was finally spoken out loud that women were against women. It initially did not make sense until Dr. Sharon Ellis Davis asked, "You do know that it was a thought that was taught to women by men?" "Liberation Theologies A Critical Essay states," "... because of the patriarchal and machismo characteristic of these societies, women are experiencing severe forms of oppression based upon sex."³⁰ Discord in the church is hazardous to the people of faith. However, it is taking place, sexism, racism and classism has been weapons of choice for Satan; and we have gravitated toward them all and used them against one another. Womanist theology has brought attention to the discord in the church related to how men feel about women, their role in the church, and their limited view of God's characteristics and connection and influence on women. Fidelia Onyuku Opukiri supports by sharing, "Women in church leadership are faced with many more challenges in comparison to our

³⁰ Roberts, "Liberation Theologies," 46.

male counterparts.”³¹ Many have left their community of faith because God is unidentifiable. The God we preach about is not supportive of women and makes women feel as if what evil they experienced was their fault alone. We also preach about a God who cannot or will not use women in the ministry. Why would a woman want to serve a God like that? A God that allows such evil to persist in the church, is it possible? Opukiri testifies, “It is a well-known practice in some African American churches to bar female ministers from the altar and from administering the Lord’s supper even if the female minister is the founder of the church.”³² Opukiri ends her work by declaring, “I therefore conclude by saying that these opposers of female ministers DO ERR due to their ignorance of the scriptures and the poser of God.”³³

Like Saul who would want to serve a God that believed in killing people of faith. As people of faith we should be inspired to discover and seek to understand a myriad of ways to help connect individuals to a God that persons can relate to regardless of gender, class and sex. Discord has spilled out of the church into the community. Black men are forgetting what it is like to live under the hand of oppression and are leaving our black women for slaughter or herding them into our own fields of inequality. Community leaders are leaving women out and devaluing their presence, gifts, and intellect. Due to this discord, we face a serious distrust between men and women. We miss the opportunities of growth and connectedness when we operate in limitations. When we

³¹ Fidelia Onyuku Opukiri, “Raising the Profile of Black Women Leaders in the Community,” 341, accessed November 22, 2019, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1758-6631.2000.tb00212.x>.

³² Opukiri, “Raising the Profile of Black Women Leaders in the Community,” 342, accessed November 22, 2019, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1758-6631.2000.tb00212.x>.

³³ Opukiri, “Raising the Profile of Black Women Leaders in the Community,” 342, accessed November 22, 2019, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1758-6631.2000.tb00212.x>.

acknowledge our limitations and seek to listen and understand what we are doing and not doing to fight to annihilate sexist, racist and classist mentality, we can make a collaborative effort. Cheryl J. Sanders claims that Gayraud Wilmore and James Cones agrees and believes that black women have made a significant impact among blacks in religion.³⁴ We cannot come against oppression alone. Many of the ideas shared in this chapter consist of conscious efforts. Nevertheless, there is a considerable amount of our behavior due to a lack of awareness and an avoidance of communal vulnerability.

Accepting our identity is key to growth and being transformed through a collaborative effort. Learning our heritage, identifying a language, and hearing other voices aids in moving together as a unified front. It can be difficult to move forward if we lack knowledge of our heritage and its practices. We lack the knowledge of our family traditions and narratives. In reflection, when you look back on the times that a loved one has died and family members begin sharing stories, clarity regarding particular situations, assumptions are cleared up and answers are provided for long awaited questions. It is like putting the pieces of a puzzle together. This chapter is purposed to move persons to a place where they can put pieces of the puzzle together before one dies or before one is unable to share their story where it can be heard, understood and celebrated. There are multiple languages that womanist theologians have mentioned that we should be aware of in the community. The language of inclusivity and art appears to be the most influential.

The stories of struggle and oppression have been conveyed through literature and inclusive language is the language of choice. These languages can be spoken and

³⁴ Cheryl J. Sanders, "Womanist Ethics Contemporary Trends and Themes," *Annual Society of Christian Ethics* 14 (1994): 299-305.

understood. Like any country, a language must be identified, learned and practiced. In order for a language to be taught one must identify a need to learn a foreign language.

Womanist Theology, Epistemology, and a New Anthropological Paradigm by Linda E.

Thomas said it best she penned:

Womanist theology is an emergent voice of African American Christian women in the United States. ... Womanist theology takes seriously the importance of understanding the “languages” of black women. There are a variety of discourses deployed by African American women based on their social location within the black community. ...this language of black women is understood by black women; it accentuates intra-group talk. It is a language of compassion, and yet it is so no-nonsense. The words and actions of this language oppose sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, and abuse to any of God’s creation. It is a language that respects the natural environment in the fullness of creation.³⁵

Individuals must see the value of inclusive language and understand how the lack in usage can drive or push people away. Inclusive language can be difficult to incorporate initially; however, once one has learned the value it can be difficult to let go. The language of art led us to the place where the womanist theology would be birthed into society. If we are accepting our identity, then the role transformation can be attained. Saul found himself in a vulnerable position when he was knocked down and lost his sight and led into town. After Saul regained his sight and found solace among the people who he once persecuted, he began to go through a transformation.

This biblical text regarding Saul reveals a few thoughts that as a people we should consider. First, we should consider embracing humanity. For centuries men have counted women as less than and refused to let them speak or share their opinions. Whites have treated and declared blacks as less than human. The reality is we are all equal. The Bible proclaims all humans as being created by God and everything that God made is

³⁵ Linda E. Thomas, “Womanist Theology, Epistemology, and a New Anthropological Paradigm,” *Cross Currents* 48, no. 4 (Summer 1998): 1-2.

good. The falsehood of the idea that a human is less than is only a faulty concept and attempt to control something or someone for selfish living and gain. Secondly, we must work toward the eradication of suffering. After the scales fell from Saul's eyes he began to see differently and sought to eradicate the spread of hate, the disease he helped to move through the country. After we have been transformed, we have different desires. Consider what would happen if we all were transformed in the image that made us see one another as equal.

For something to be eradicated one must understand the need for its destruction. Lack of awareness of the issues shared in this chapter would make the eradication of suffering impossible. Oppression would continue and humanity of all would never be understood or grasped. Finally, after embracing humanity and eradicating suffering, we must work to explore reconciliation. Anytime that one or a group of people has been oppressed, it becomes difficult to forgive so quickly or easily. However, womanist theology sets a model for everyone. Womanist theology believes in bringing everyone along even the ones that abandoned them like white feminist and black men. Since the womanist theology is forgiving does not mean that each individual woman is as forgiving. Many women have been wronged so they have not reached a place of reconciliation.

Without exploring reconciliation, it will be difficult to effectively teach the oppressive behaviors that we are unaware of. The word exploration suggests that there is a place that has not been visited or is unknown. We, as men, can journey with women as they lead us to the origins of their pain and seek to identify and learn of the practices that intensifies their pain and or attempts to keep them oppressed. The hope is to move

persons to a place where we no longer have to battle one another but we wrestle against unawareness, oppression and the fear of vulnerability. Womanist theology is an avenue in we all can travel together to explore the behaviors and practices.

In conclusion, those who choose to operate in limitations will find it complicated to find meaning. Without exploring what it means to have a limited mindset and experience, we will remain in the sandstorms of hatred and inequality. Unlimited mindsets and experiences lead us to discord in community and the church. Presently, we fight over who has been called and chosen for such a time like this. It takes a community to make a difference in the world. One group, one race and interest group cannot solve the challenges of the world by themselves; it will take the collective voices of all. As a society we must see the whole pie. One sect of people cannot see all the dimensions to one problem.

The research aim was to explore womanist theology and its connection to the need to become aware of the traumatic events that has helped to shape us and our role in the world. Negative behavior is believed to be the reason that drives a wedge between us all. This negative behavior is only the result of some form of oppression experienced by someone in our lives that later became unaware of.

In my research, we discovered that faith has been misused and abused with the whip of racism, the baton of classicism and water hoses of silence. All are weapons of choice with the intent to destroy discourage and keep under the sheets of oppression. Theologies that inform us pertaining to my project consist of narrative, liberative and silence. The main one is womanist theology. Womanist theology has influenced me to proclaim it for myself. Womanist theology is the most forgiving of them all. It instructs

us to forgive all those that seek and work to keep us under the hand of injustice.

Womanist theology not only forgives but it carries all those that have rejected them publicly and privately. Deciding on which theology spoke most to my project was difficult. Silence, narrative and liberation theology can fit perfectly; however, these theologies are limiting and exclusive. Womanist theology is about a group of people that have been excluded by everyone; and yet, they still want to forgive and include everyone no matter how they have been treated.

As a result of this exclusion, many have been divided. Our negative behavior distances us from everyone. It forces us to live in the dark places of our lives and community. It prevents us from thinking beyond just what we know. This exclusion, negative behavior restricts us from living a limitless life with everyone else including ourselves. The theoretical framework of womanist theology leads us to be inclusive in our thoughts and language. It also influences us to embrace who we are and who we become because of our experiences. This work becomes important to us because it leads us down the road to community and collaboration. Academically, this work will push us to do further research on how far we have come over time in relationship to our connection with one another. As a community, this work challenges us to examine how we are treating one another in the faith and within our own ethnic community. Research has confirmed that there is a consistency in the negative behavior due to the unawareness of others. Saul continued to struggle with this reality. He was under the impression that he had it all together. Ignorant to how his own traumatic experiences shaped him and his role as a persecutor of Christians.

For centuries, the Baptist church has experienced rejection and ridicule. Without resolution and addressing the mental exhaustion of being made outcast, the Baptist faith has continued and has evolved in her rejection practices. The rejection is so embedded in the culture and blood line of the Baptist denomination we are completely unaware of its affects and continued practices. This research has motivated me to investigate and observe more of how unaware we are of our pain. As a result of our mistreatment from others and one another, we are clueless of how we have negatively impacted ourselves and our future of Baptistdom. My hope is that we can explore and examine the impacts of traumatic events and determine its connections to unawareness and negative behavior. With a faithful expedition of this research, we can get a better understanding of how mental health is vital to growth as we seek to become kingdom disciples.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

For years, I have heard the elders of the church say that everything that happens in life is found in the scriptures. As I became an adult, I discovered that they were correct. What they did not reveal or discuss was the psychological warfare that also takes place in the Bible. Emotional and mental distress is expressed throughout the scriptures. Feelings and how to manage our feelings are also displayed such as (be angry and sin not) and Jesus wept. Grief-stricken individuals fill the pages of the Bible. However, the mention of mental illness and emotional distress sends Christians to the hills running. Psychology in some churches are a forbidden practice and discussion. Many Christians have said that we do not need a psychologist because God would heal us. It is imperative that we seek to understand, identify and learn about the varying mental illnesses that plague our congregations so that we may aid families in getting the professionals needed for their loved ones. God has created us and allowed us to explore a variety of disciplines. This truth of Christians being afraid of mental illness is real and it comes from the idea that mental illness is misunderstood and something to be feared.

There are many families who wrestle with mental illness in their families. No one wants to deal with the reality of mental illness. We must admit it is scary and tiresome to aid our loved ones in getting the help that they need to address the mental disparity that we confront daily. There is a family member that we once had to admit into the hospital;

and it was a difficult experience. He was in danger of hurting himself and he was not willing to go in for the help. Ultimately, we had to trick him in order to get him to the hospital. There are times when I look at him and he looks back as if what we did happened recently. Many struggle with the embarrassment of their current condition. Others grieve because it is not what they anticipated in their lives. Mental health is not a supported discipline economically, politically and socially. Healthcare has made many attempts to assist those suffering from mental illness. However, because mental health is not a revenue producing department this discipline is not as heavily embraced.

Psychology is the one discipline that can give more clarity to how people are thinking, feeling and behaving. Psychology is a discipline that we should as a society put more money in because it can lead us into a better understanding of why people do what they do. Our lack of exploration keeps us from providing and preparing individuals to aid in this arena of vocation. Like every other discipline math, science and English psychology impact all studies.

Within this chapter, we will examine the discipline of psychology and how it impacts the research project concerning the lack of self-awareness. In this chapter, we will examine the trauma theory. There are three types of trauma according to the psychologist. The three types of trauma consist of complex, acute and chronic. Persons who have been impacted by traumatic events have oftentimes suppressed those events; however, those experiences influence who we are, especially our behavior. The danger comes when we are unaware of how past experiences direct our reactions. This is identified as triggers; the research being conducted relates to how the lack of self-awareness leads to negative and unhealthy behavior for an individual and those around

them. This chapter will also explore what other ministries are doing in relationship to the lack of self-awareness and how it is being addressed in their churches. Finally, this chapter will examine how psychology informs the project as it relates to the lack of self-awareness through theories, theologians, practitioners, and ministries.

There are recent and relevant work done in the church to deal with the issues of the lack of self-awareness addressed in this project. There have been several pastors, theologians, and practitioners who have committed their lives and ministries to models or practices implementing models related to this topic. As a result, they have made a great contribution to the field of psychology and to the community of faith.

When it comes to dealing with mental illness, emotional distress, understanding and studying behavior, there are multiple resources available to the community. Psychiatrists, pastoral counselors, licensed practical therapists, psychologists and social workers nurses, occupational and rehabilitation therapists, counselors and other mental health workers. Mental health support can be accessed at work through (EAP) (employment assistance programs), counseling centers, and churches.

There have been five identified churches that provide support to manage and address mental illness. First, there is the Church at Chapel Hill Church in Douglasville, Georgia. They have a component in their ministry that allows for counseling to those in and outside of their congregation. The Life Development Center was launched in the spring of 2008 as a ministry of the Church at Chapel Hill. They provide professional counseling services with licensed counselors and master's level student interns. They are faith sensitive and offer counseling with a Christian perspective. They offer counseling seminars and free support groups.

Secondly, there is the North Atlanta Church of Christ located in Dunwoody, Georgia, and the Genesis Christian Counseling. Since 1992, the Genesis Center for Christian Counseling has worked with individuals, couples, and families to help them gain new perspectives, transform their lives and improve their relationships. Their doors are open to clients from all religious, non-religious ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Like the Church at the Chapel Hill, they provide many of the same services apart from support groups. This program does provide a pastoral counselor that provides services in both English and Spanish. Thirdly, there is Cathedral Counseling Center led by The Cathedral of St. Phillip in Atlanta, Georgia. Counseling in the pastoral tradition serves people of all faiths as well as those who profess no religious belief. Therapists at the Cathedral Counseling Center understand that effective counseling respects the individual beliefs and spiritual values of each person. The Cathedral Counseling Center serves those of every gender, race, creed and ethnic background. Fourthly, there is Eagles Landing Counseling Center in McDonough, Georgia; and it was birthed out of an association of churches coming together to meet the needs of those in mental and emotional distress. Finally, there is Perimeter Church in Johns Creek, Georgia. They provide multiple support groups for those dealing with life's circumstances that cause depression, anxiety, and mental and emotional breaks. Not all Christians or faith organizations are afraid of the mental health community. These are progressive churches being relatable to the current issues facing society today.

Perimeter Church will be the most beneficial approach to the project. After examining the other resources, I discovered that their resources are specific to individuals, not groups. Perimeter Church has comprised their ministries with groups

geared to support people in a group setting. The themes that are present related to community, vulnerability, trauma, oppression, negative and unhealthy behavior. Often, we live under the premise that we can solve problems on our own. Others are living without knowing that they have been through traumatic events that have shaped and changed their lives. As a result of that lack of knowledge, when an event triggers the negative reminders unhealthy behavior erupts without being ignorant of its effects. It takes the community to identify and address unhealthy behavior. Vulnerability is a requirement for self-awareness to take hold. The beauty of support groups is the reality that you are not alone and that everyone in the group has one commonality. That commonality is the thread that synchronizes our bond with one another. Support groups assure that there is no judgment or thought that one is better than another. Support groups encourage that the space that they share is safe, confidential, resourceful and collaborative. Support groups are found to be a step before one is able to seek assistance for themselves.

My assumptions are the following: some churches are afraid to address mental health; the church does not have the resources to address mental health; and the church does not understand the value in addressing mental health. The need for addressing mental health is increasing in the church. However, not enough to aid those in emotional and mental distress. The churches mentioned earlier in this chapter are only a few. Out of the five churches, only one of them was Catholic. Currently, many of the churches in our society are set on building multimillion-dollar buildings and recreational centers. Not enough are addressing the mental illness and emotional distress that is plaguing the world today.

The resources are helping to bring the theme and hypothesis into sharper focus. It is helping me to understand that there is a true need for support groups, safe spaces for people to identify their unhealthy behavior in a venue where they can be vulnerable. After reviewing the resources, I have come to understand that individuals cannot be self-aware because we are too busy avoiding vulnerability. Vulnerability must be avoided because there is no identified place of safety or community. As a result, we remain less aware and healing is thwarted.

In the past, pastors use to meet with members of the congregation to help with their need for support. Pastors have met with married couples to aid them when in marital distress. Pastors have relied on preaching to help people to get through their most difficult situations. Due to the climate of the current society, emotional distress and mental illness have been and are not currently addressed. The amount of mass shootings has increased over the years due to traumatic events and or psychological breaks or triggers in people's lives. Since churches have recognized and identified the need to provide spiritual, emotional and mental support I would say that they have been successful in meeting the needs of individuals. How effective they are would be difficult to determine. There would obviously need to be an interview conducted for each site to be able to say if the sites have truly been effective or not. One question that comes to mind is how did the churches get to a place where they saw the need and what was the driving force behind starting a counseling center under the churches watch versus doing what Eagles Landing Counseling did by partnering with a counseling center?

The way I will address the need will be through a support group that focuses on healing individuals by helping them to become self-aware while making them feel safe at

their most vulnerable moments. My new insights include using therapists during the support group to be available to answer questions during the group work. Methodologies include observation, support groups, and interviews. Theories include that of telling of stories and faith development. The telling of stories will help an individual to get clarity as to why they respond negatively to the events in their lives. Often, we forget the story that is being told to our minds. We are unaware of what the story is and how it is informing us and our behavior. *Faith Development* by Dr. James Fowler informs us that we have stages that we go through while developing as a person of faith. Alongside these organizations, there are multiple practices opened and opening up to meet the growing need for psychological support and interventions.

Psychology is the discipline that best fits the project. Psychology leads us to the path of examining the behavior of humankind. Psychology urges us to consider the need to understand why people do what they do. There is an emotional component to this project that we cannot overlook. Paul's behavior was originated from a traumatic event that he was not aware of its negative impact. Paul's desire to kill others would suggest that he had a hate for someone. Paul, in turn, returned the trauma to another group. This hate that he was experiencing was unknown to him. He thought his oppressive behavior was helping the greater good. Unrecognized trauma had taken over his life and behavior.

Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical. Longer term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea. While these feelings are normal, some people have difficulty moving on with their lives. Psychologists can help these individuals find constructive ways of managing their emotions.¹

¹ "Trauma," American Psychological Association, accessed September 20, 2020, <https://www.apa.org/topics/trauma>.

Psychology is the path that we must pursue for the church. We must invest in the mental wellbeing of our congregants. There must be a component in our ministries that provide education related to the benefits of mental health and resources to aid others in getting mental support. In addition, we must help our families leave the idea that it is something to be ashamed of. We need not be ashamed of our family members. It has been our shame that has kept the need to address mental and emotional sickness in the dark. Shame has prevented us from connecting with the thread of understanding that would allow us to be on the same page related to the necessary endeavor to address mental and emotional illness. For those in the field of mental health, they would agree with my assumptions. Sadly, enough not even those in the healthcare profession will agree with my assumptions. There are those in healthcare who are still unaware of the need for mental and emotional wellness. For some that are in the church they would disagree with me as well. They will say that God will heal and deliver. Only limiting themselves to the thought that God cannot use therapists, psychiatrists, and psychologists to participate in their healing, when in fact, they look to medical doctors to heal them through antibiotics and medications.

Yes, the resources provided through psychology are helping to bring the theme and hypothesis into sharper focus. Its discipline has challenged me to think more critically about how we as faith leaders and churches are responding to the theme of the lack of self-awareness. The resources of psychology have also propelled me into thinking outside the box related to meeting the needs of congregants. The resources have also caused me to consider the need for countermeasures for thinking that is against that of supporting psychology and her benefits. There is a significant amount of internal pain exhibited by people of faith. The internal pain that exists has contributed to a host of

individuals leaving the church never to return and seeking hope and faith elsewhere. The internal pain that Christians have is the wall that stands in between the relationship of God and humankind. The more internal pain goes unattended the worse we become; and the more trauma we cause others who are looking for faith, hope, and healing.

In the past, individuals have sought healing and support through support groups, therapy, and medication. Others have found support through camps as well. The need to become more aware has been done by seeking out individual therapy. Some people buy into the misconceptions and myths of mental health and its treatment. Therapy has been identified as something for “crazy people,” persons have kept it as a secret. As a result, the secret to therapy and its effectiveness has also been kept a secret. Many people have sought out ways to become more self-aware through the reading of self- help books.

What has worked and what has not worked can be a subjective question. Many people have gone to therapy on their own free will and others have been forced by the courts but for either reason does not guarantee its effectiveness. An individual can go to therapy and because they may not feel connected to the therapist, they will not feel safe enough to be vulnerable. However, there are some therapies that is evidenced based. Cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) and dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) are popular evidence-based therapies.

The Mayo Clinic states cognitive behavioral therapy is used to treat a wide range of issues. It is often the preferred type of psychotherapy because it can quickly help you identify and cope with specific challenges.² Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a short-term, goal-oriented psychotherapy treatment that takes a hands-on, practical

² Mayo Clinic, “Cognitive Behavioral Therapy,” accessed November 13, 2019, [mayoclinic.org//tests-procedures/cognitive-behavioral-therapy/about/pac_20384610](https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/cognitive-behavioral-therapy/about/pac_20384610).

approach to problem-solving.³ Cognitive behavioral therapy also differs from other therapies in the nature of the relationship that the therapist will try to establish.⁴ CBT favors a more equal relationship that is, perhaps, more business-like, being problem-focused and practical.⁵ Beck coined the term “collaborative empiricism,” which emphasizes the importance of client and therapist working together to test out how the ideas behind CBT might apply to the client’s individual situation and problems.⁶ Reading Beck’s work left me wondering why this kind of information was never shared, taught or explained to the community versus allowing people to live on false truths concerning mental health.

Beck suggested that these thinking patterns are set up in childhood and become automatic and relatively fixed.⁷ To think that this kind of information could have and remains helpful when it comes down to raising children and leading ministry. Cognitive behavioral therapy acts to help the person understand what thinking patterns are all about. It helps him or her to step outside their automatic thoughts and test them out.⁸ Clearly, negative things can and do happen but when one is in a disturbed state of mind, they may

³ Ben Martin, “In-Depth: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy,” Psych Central, 1, accessed September 27, 2020, <https://psychcentral.com/lib/in-depth-cognitive-behavioral-therapy/>.

⁴ Martin, “In-Depth,” 3, accessed September 27, 2020, <https://psychcentral.com/lib/in-depth-cognitive-behavioral-therapy/>.

⁵ Martin, “In-Depth,” 3, accessed September 27, 2020, <https://psychcentral.com/lib/in-depth-cognitive-behavioral-therapy/>.

⁶ Martin, “In-Depth,” 1, accessed September 27, 2020, <https://psychcentral.com/lib/in-depth-cognitive-behavioral-therapy/>.

⁷ Martin, “In-Depth,” 1, accessed September 27, 2020, <https://psychcentral.com/lib/in-depth-cognitive-behavioral-therapy/>.

⁸ Martin, “In-Depth,” 1, accessed September 27, 2020, <https://psychcentral.com/lib/in-depth-cognitive-behavioral-therapy/>.

be basing predictions and interpretations on a biased view of the situation, making the difficulty that one face seem much worse. Cognitive behavioral therapy helps people to correct these misinterpretations.⁹ Imagine, if pastors knew this information about how it could have informed them and how they dealt with members of the congregation. Alongside of sharing and leading others in scripture and prayer pastors have the responsibility of acknowledging the complexities of life. Furthermore, if pastors understood the dynamics of mental illness and the impact of therapy and resources for mental health many families could have gotten relief from assistance.

Cognitive behavioral therapy is a form of psychotherapy that focuses on modifying dysfunctional emotions, behaviors, and thoughts by interrogating and uprooting negative or irrational beliefs.¹⁰ Cognitive behavioral therapy aims at identifying harmful thoughts, assesses whether they are an accurate depiction of reality and if they are not employing strategies to challenge and overcome them.¹¹ As a community of faith, we need something in place that will help individuals deal with the traumatic events of their lives. Cognitive behavioral therapy was founded by psychiatrist, Aaron Beck, in the 1960s, following his disillusionment with Freudian psychoanalysis, and a desire to explore more empirical forms of therapy. Cognitive behavioral therapy also has roots in Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy, (REBT) the brainchild of

⁹ Martin, "In-Depth," 1, accessed September 27, 2020, <https://psychcentral.com/lib/in-depth-cognitive-behavioral-therapy/>.

¹⁰ "Cognitive Behavioral," Psychology Today, accessed November 13, 2019, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/cognitive-behavioral-therapy>.

¹¹ "Cognitive Behavioral," Psychology Today, accessed November 13, 2019, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/cognitive-behavioral-therapy>.

psychologist Albert Ellis.¹² Initially, these interventions were so focused on changing cognitions and behaviors that many patients felt criticized, misunderstood, and invalidated, and consequently dropped out of treatment altogether.¹³ From observation, there are individuals in the church that behaved in the same manner. How many of them were acting out because they were dealing with a mental illness and others stated, “do not worry that is the way that they are.”

Through an interplay of science and practice, clinical experiences with multi-problematic, suicidal patients sparked further research and treatment development. Most notably, Linehan weaved into the treatment interventions designed to convey acceptance of the patient and to help the patient accept herself, her emotions thoughts, the world and others.¹⁴ Additionally, some research examined DBT-oriented treatments for other clinical problems, including eating disorders and depression in elderly patients.¹⁵ All in which exhibit negative behavior when experiencing an episode. What can we as a church do to manage this behavior? In summary, the patients for whom Dialectical Behavioral Therapy has the strongest and most consistent empirical support include parasuicidal

¹² “Cognitive Behavioral,” Psychology Today, accessed November 13, 2019, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/cognitive-behavioral-therapy>.

¹³ Alexander L. Chapman, “Dialectical Behavior Therapy Current Indication and Unique Elements, Psychiatry MMC,” NCBI, 1, accessed November 13, 2019, [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/pmc2963469](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/pmc2963469/).

¹⁴ Chapman, “Dialectical Behavior Therapy,” 1, accessed November 13, 2019, [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/pmc2963469](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/pmc2963469/).

¹⁵ Chapman, “Dialectical Behavior Therapy,” 3, accessed November 13, 2019, [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/pmc2963469](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/pmc2963469/).

women with Bi-polar Disorder.¹⁶ Linehan makes me question her involvement and research of men, she seems to only focus on women and parasuicide.

Dialectical Behavioral Therapy is a cognitive-behavioral treatment by Marsha Linehan, Ph.D., in the 1980's to treat people with borderline personality disorder.¹⁷ Dialectical Behavioral Therapy skills group participants learn and practice skills alongside others. Members of the group are encouraged to share their experiences and provide mutual support. The individual therapist will help the patient stay motivated, apply the Dialectical Behavioral Therapy skills within daily life, and address obstacles that might arise over the course of treatment.¹⁸ In exploring groups and self-awareness practices, it is possible that DBT could be used in the church and therapy provided for persons in the group. Dialectical Behavioral Therapy focuses on high risk, tough to treat patients. These patients often have multiple diagnoses. Dialectical Behavioral Therapy was initially designed to treat people with suicidal behavior and borderline personality disorder. It has been adapted for other mental health problems that threaten a person's safety, relationships, work, and emotional well-being.¹⁹ What a powerful ministry would be to provide professional therapy to persons within the church or in the community. The church has avoided this issue for years and it is now time to step up. A unique aspect of

¹⁶ Chapman, "Dialectical Behavior Therapy," 3, accessed November 13, 2019, ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/pmc2963469.

¹⁷ "Dialectical Behavior Therapy," Psychology Today, 1, accessed November 13, 2019, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapy-types/dialectical-behavior-therapy>.

¹⁸ "Dialectical Behavior Therapy," Psychology Today, 1, accessed November 13, 2019, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapy-types/dialectical-behavior-therapy>.

¹⁹ "Dialectical Behavior Therapy for Mental Health Problems," WebMD, 2, accessed November 13, 2019, <http://webmd.com/mental-health/dialectical-behavior-therapy#1>.

DBT is its focus on acceptance of the patient's experience as a way for therapists to reassure them and balance the work needed to change negative behaviors.²⁰

How do we get people to acknowledge their negative behaviors so that they may see it in real-time? The only way that I can imagine this happening is if persons were in a smaller group and it was lovingly brought to their attention and use DBT to guide the conversation. Dialectical Behavioral Therapy treatment is a type of psychotherapy, or talk therapy, that utilizes a cognitive approach. Dialectical Behavior Therapy emphasizes the psychosocial aspects of treatment.²¹ Most times, individuals are clueless about their triggers or thought process surrounding what informs behavior. The theory behind the approach is that some people are prone to react in a more intense and out of the ordinary manner toward certain emotional situations, primarily those found in romantic, family and friend relationships.²²

Dialectical Behavioral Therapy theory suggests that some people's arousal levels in such situations can increase far more quickly than the average person, attain a higher level of emotional stimulation, and take a significant amount of time to return to baseline levels.²³ Reading this research made me realized how much work must be done in the faith community in an unapologetic way. Since few people understand such reactions, most of their family and their childhood emphasized invalidation. They do not have any

²⁰ "Dialectical Behavior Therapy for Mental Health Problems," WebMD, 1, accessed November 13, 2019, <http://www.webmd.com/mental-health/dialectical-behavior-therapy#1a>.

²¹ John M. Grohol, "An Overview of Dialectical Behavior Therapy," Psych Central, 1, accessed November 13, 2019, <http://www.psychcentral.com/lib/an-overview-of-dialectical-behavior-therapy>.

²² Grohol, "An Overview of Dialectical Behavior Therapy," 1, accessed November 13, 2019, <http://www.psychcentral.com/lib/an-overview-of-dialectical-behavior-therapy>.

²³ Grohol, "An Overview of Dialectical Behavior Therapy," 1, accessed November 13, 2019, <http://www.psychcentral.com/lib/an-overview-of-dialectical-behavior-therapy>.

methods for coping with these sudden, intense surges of emotion. Dialectical Behavior Therapy us a method for teaching skills that will help in this task.²⁴

The events of one's life will be examined through the lens of a traumatic event. Trauma creates wounds that can remain open for an extended period. There are three types of trauma complex, acute and chronic. The focus has been on self-awareness, as a result of the research, a new insight is called spiritual self-awareness. Spiritual self-awareness is all about mindfulness of your current spiritual state. State that requires one to be one with the spirit of God. God is the one that aids an individual in understanding self. Theories consist of Alfred Adler's theory, CBT and DBT. All theories give clarity regarding how to aid persons in self-awareness. Methodologies will consist of support groups, interviews, and observation.

The problem being addressed is how the lack of self-awareness leads to negative and unhealthy behavior of self and others. It is important to understand what causes such behavior or what provokes an individual to behave in a negative way. As a result, the discipline of psychology will be explored. In our association, people and churches are leaving because there is no relevance, rejection chases churches, off and churches are feeling excluded and isolated. Negative behavior runs in the bloodline of the association and the association is completely unaware. Without being aware of the cause of negative behavior the association will continue to suffer and remain on the ventilator fighting for life. In the book *The Body Keeps The Score* it states, "...If an organism is stuck in survival mode, its energies are focused on fighting off unseen which leaves no room for

²⁴ Grohol, "An Overview of Dialectical Behavior Therapy," 2, accessed November 13, 2019, <http://www.psychcentral.com/lib/an-overview-of-dialectical-behavior-therapy>.

nurture, care, and love.”²⁵ The study of the mind appears to be a complex task. Kolk further states, “For us humans, it means that as long as the mind is defending itself against invisible assaults, our closet bonds are threatened, along with our ability to imagine, plan, play, learn, and pay attention to other people’s needs.”²⁶

Psychology was chosen because it could give clarity as to why people exemplify certain behaviors. Psychology also serves as an informant for helping one to understand the causes and effects of traumatic events. The discipline of psychology informs individuals how to respond to oppressive habits. The problem of the lack of self-awareness is an underestimated one, especially when gone unchecked or unaddressed. Without addressing such cases, it sets an individual up for destruction and the devastation of relationships and community. If we can understand some of the reasons why people act the way that they do, we can change and become more aware as to how we treat and support one another within the church. There are varying perspectives of psychology: biological, psychodynamic, behavioral, social-cultural, cognitive, humanistic, trait and psychoanalytic. There are also a few schools of thought: structuralism, humanistic, Gestalt, psychoanalysis, behaviorism, and functionalism.

The trauma theory was selected because it is the trauma that persons experience that causes them to respond in a negative way, specifically if that is ignored or hidden. The body and the mind become a storehouse for these memories for safekeeping and informs one how to react or respond to the events of their lives. Dupree and Parsons in their work *The Relations Between Biological and Sociocultural Theory* states, “It is safe

²⁵ Bessel Van Der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2014), 76.

²⁶ Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 76.

to say that this kind of thinking became an increasingly prominent aspect of the theoretical discussions in both the field of evolutionary theory and of microbiology in the generation past.”²⁷ Biological psychology focuses on the physiology and genetics of a person, as sociocultural psychology sets the lens on the environment and social dynamics surrounding an individual.

Humanistic psychological theory suggests that one examines the whole self. J. Wesley Robb suggests in his article “The Hidden Philosophical Agenda A Commentary on Humanistic Psychology,” “For the most part, those psychologists who designate themselves as humanistic are psychotherapists who are involved daily with the basic issues of man’s inability to cope with life as he finds it.”²⁸ In observing the gender variation between the authors, it appears that gender strife continues even in the growth of medicine and mental health.

Trauma according to “Psychology Today” is, “trauma is the experience of severe psychological distress following any terrible or life-threatening event. Sufferers may develop emotional disturbances such as extreme anxiety, anger, survivors’ guilt, sadness or PTSD.”²⁹ As a chaplain, the idea of trauma appears to be stuck in the minds of the people as something that has more correlation with accidents. There is much to be said pertaining to trauma as well as not enough. Based on research, there is much to be discussed.

²⁷ A. Hunter Dupree and Talcott Parsons, “The Relations Between Biological and Sociological Theory,” *Zygon* 11, no. 3 (1976): 165.

²⁸ J. Wesley Robb, “The Hidden Philosophical Agenda: A Community on Humanistic Psychology,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, accessed November 22, 2019, <https://academic.oup.com/jaar/article-abstract/XXXVII/1/3/744458?redirectedFrom=fulltext>.

²⁹ “Trauma,” *Psychology Today*, accessed November 22, 2019, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/trauma>.

Casey L. May and Blair E. Wisco frankly discussed the need for more research pertaining to trauma and the need to examine the differences of trauma being experienced based on exposure and proximity in their article “Defining Trauma: How Level of Exposure and Proximity Affect Risk for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder.” They both shared that, “Future research on this topic could better distinguish between different definitions of cumulative trauma and examine the contribution of these various types of trauma exposure to PTSD risk.”³⁰ The church is looking for ways to be relative and resourceful. While looking for ways to be active, we must understand the sacrifices and the cost of serving. There are so many ways to be traumatized beyond just seeing something violent.

May and Wisco proclaimed, “However, practicing clinicians should keep in mind that there are individuals who may be greatly affected by the sudden, nonviolent death of a loved one.”³¹ In addition, they went on to note, “Other research has compared children who have observed violence within the home with children who both observed and were victimized by the violence.”³² If there were no other reasons to work to get certified on how to identify abused children we now have a reason. Children grow up with unaddressed needs and they go on to either fight the urge to be violent or they become violent. Kathryn S. Collins in *Trauma Adapted Family Connections: Reducing Developmental and Complex Trauma Symptomatology to Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect* defines the trauma theory as, “... evidence-supported, practice informed, rooted,

³⁰ Casey L. May and Blair Wisco, *Defining Trauma: How Level of Exposure and Proximity Affect Risk for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2015), 3.

³¹ May and Wisco, *Defining Trauma*, 3.

³² May and Wisco, *Defining Trauma*, 3.

in the sociopolitical context of human well-being, and helps to explicate families' responses to traumatizing events."³³ The trauma theory has three types, acute, complex and chronic. Based on research, the three lack of equality when it comes to literary reference. Acute has a smaller portion of information. Complex and chronic trauma has a more extensive amount of information concerning them.

Acute stress disorder/trauma is characterized by the development of severe anxiety, dissociation, and other symptoms that occurs within one month after exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor, (e.g., witnessing a death or serious accident).³⁴ As a response to the traumatic event, the individual develops dissociative symptoms. Individuals with acute stress disorder have a decrease in emotional responsiveness, often finding it difficult or impossible to experience pleasure in previously enjoyable activities and frequently feel guilty about pursuing the usual life task.³⁵ Acute stress disorder is also characterized by significant avoidance of stimuli that arouse recollections of the trauma (e.g., avoiding thoughts, feelings, conversations, activities, places people).³⁶ It appears that Chronic trauma results from incidents that have occurred over and over again in a person's life. Eric Johnson states that those who have experienced complex

³³ Kathryn S. Collins et al., "Trauma Adapted Family Connections: Reducing Developmental and Complex Trauma Symptomatology to Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect," *Child Welfare* 90, no. 6 (2011): 29.

³⁴ Steve Bressert, "Acute Stress Disorder," PsychCentral, accessed October 24, 2019, <https://psychcentral.com/disorders/acute-stress-disorder-symptoms/>.

³⁵ Bressert, "Acute Stress Disorder," 1, accessed October 24, 2019, <https://psychcentral.com/disorders/acute-stress-disorder-symptoms/>.

³⁶ Bressert, "Acute Stress Disorder," 2, accessed October 24, 2019, <https://psychcentral.com/disorders/acute-stress-disorder-symptoms/>.

trauma has some degree of dissociation, that is the splitting of consciousness into more or less isolated components, which resist exposure and full integration into consciousness.³⁷

Most of us know from sad personal experience that terrible grief is typically accompanied by the sense that this wretched state will last forever, and that we will never get over our loss. Trauma is the ultimate experience of “this will last forever.”³⁸ It is surprising that veterans did not focus more on exhibitions of this negative behavior in the church. Those who have endured severe, chronic trauma during childhood tend to have problems with emotion regulation (having overwhelming emotion or no emotion), distortions in self-perception (extreme shame and self-hatred), problems in the perception of others.³⁹ So many of these things have happened in the church I am curious to know why more has not been in the church or even why others have not made a clearer correlation of mental illness and the many mass shootings we have experienced.

Complex trauma is described by psychologist and trauma expert, Dr. Christine Courtois, as “a type of trauma that occurs repeatedly and cumulatively, usually over a period of time and within specific relationships and contexts.”⁴⁰ We examine soldiers who develop complex trauma and explore their contributions to self-condemnation. Religious issues are likely to be involved. Active wrongdoing, moral failure, and failures

³⁷ Eric Johnson, “Restoring the Shattered Self: A Christian Counselor's,” The Gospel Coalition, accessed September 3, 2019, <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/review/restoring-the-shattered-self-a-christian-counselors-guide-to-complex-trauma/>.

³⁸ Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 70.

³⁹ Davediuk and Gingrich, *Restoring the Shattered Self*, 600.

⁴⁰ Lisa Firestone, “Recognizing Complex Trauma,” Psychology Today, accessed September 3, 2019, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/compassion-matters/201207/recognizing-complex-trauma>.

of church-and culture-created religious expectations contribute.⁴¹ They may violate their own deeply held moral beliefs, witness the unethical behaviors of others, or question the justness of their own countries' involvement in war. As a result, they suffer internal conflict between their morally questionable actions and internal beliefs.⁴² How does the church deal with moral injury? How many of our members are going through moral injury due to the decisions they made about their loved one in the hospitals? Such self-condemnation can occur in response to mere moral injury or can be part of complex trauma.⁴³ All of us possess this inner voice critic, but those of us who are traumatized may experience this "voice" as a deeply destructive and terrifying enemy whose attacks can feel crippling and constant and can lead to even life-threatening self-destructive behavior.⁴⁴ This information on trauma continues to provide more testimony as to why we need to be partnering with the mental health community to help individuals manage such a task. When a person feels hopeless or isolated in their suffering or finds it difficult to trust easily, he or she can become further victimized by their critical inner voice. In turn, they may fail to have compassion for themselves and may make choices that repeat destructive patterns of their past.⁴⁵ As a church, we can be that voice of God reminding others that there is compassion for them. Although there are common experiences that

⁴¹ Everett L. Worthington Jr. and Diane Langberg, "Religious Considerations and Self-Forgiveness in Treating Complex Trauma and Moral Injury in Present and Former Soldiers," 274, accessed November 19, 2019, https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=Religious+Considerations+and+Self-Forgiveness+in+Treating+Complex+Trauma+an+Moral+Injury+in+Present+and&hl=en&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholart.

⁴² Worthington Jr. and Langberg, "Religious Considerations and Self-Forgiveness," 274.

⁴³ Worthington Jr. and Langberg, "Religious Considerations and Self-Forgiveness," 275.

⁴⁴ Firestone, "Recognizing Complex Trauma," 2.

⁴⁵ Firestone, "Recognizing Complex Trauma," 2.

deployed soldiers will have to deal with, we suggest that these problems will be especially acute when people develop complex traumas.⁴⁶ Self-forgiveness is described as a coping strategy for stresses arising from self-condemnation and discuss the particular considerations for adapting a psycho-educational self-forgiveness intervention for military personnel and veterans.⁴⁷ We have been preaching self-forgiveness for a long time however it sounds differently. It sounds like God will forgive you. When we should be saying that God forgives you and it is okay to forgive yourself. It is essential for victims of trauma to find ways to differentiate from the negative programming they have received in moments of stress. In order to do so, they must be able to feel compassion for themselves and the intense emotional anguish they have endured.⁴⁸ It is not just war trauma, moral injury, or participation in combat that suggest a need to consider self-forgiveness in order to cope with self-condemnation.⁴⁹

Being at risk for complex trauma is not the same thing as experiencing it. It is worthy, at this point, to mention the resilience of a typical person.⁵⁰ When we hear of or read about horrific situations that sometimes lead to complex traumas, we assume that virtually everyone will respond to the situation with a trauma response and perhaps with PTSD or Complex Trauma.⁵¹ What is surprising is the lack of participation in the church-related to trauma. How many churches are actively working to deal with trauma

⁴⁶ Worthington Jr. and Langberg, "Religious Considerations and Self-Forgiveness," 275.

⁴⁷ Worthington Jr. and Langberg, "Religious Considerations and Self-Forgiveness," 275.

⁴⁸ Firestone, "Recognizing Complex Trauma," 2.

⁴⁹ Worthington Jr. and Langberg, "Religious Considerations and Self-Forgiveness," 276.

⁵⁰ Worthington Jr. and Langberg, "Religious Considerations and Self-Forgiveness," 278.

⁵¹ Worthington Jr. and Langberg, "Religious Considerations and Self-Forgiveness," 279.

and victims of trauma? Who will give the clarion call for churches to become more active in the mental health community? They found that while resilient people react appropriately to negative events, they also worry less and can bypass non-materializing threats better than non-resilient people.⁵²

If the church does not begin to discuss mental health more, the church will lose more credibility and more members in the congregation will continue to grow weary. Disrupted systems of meaning are a core domain in which adults with a complex trauma history are impacted, often leading to adversely affected belief systems.⁵³ The chronic and interpersonal context of the trauma exposure differentiates complex trauma from a more general understanding of traumatic stress.⁵⁴ Further, some of the core components of the long-term impact of complex trauma overlap significantly with spiritual concerns.⁵⁵ This is where we need more pastors and pastoral counselors trained to deal with the spiritual. In order to function in a healthy and effective manner as a therapist, the importance of self-reflection and self-awareness is vital. When considering the potential of working with trauma on the spiritual life of the therapist, there is an added consideration in knowing oneself.⁵⁶ Social psychologist suggests that conflicts are often triggered by fear.⁵⁷ If only all pastors understood and was aware of the dynamics of fear

⁵² Worthington Jr. and Langberg, "Religious Considerations and Self-Forgiveness," 279.

⁵³ Jana Pressley and Joseph Spinazzola, "Beyond Survival: Application of a Complex Trauma Treatment Model in the Christian Context," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 43, no. 1 (2015): 8.

⁵⁴ Pressley and Spinazzola, "Beyond Survival," 8.

⁵⁵ Pressley and Spinazzola, "Beyond Survival," 10.

⁵⁶ Pressley and Spinazzola, "Beyond Survival," 12.

⁵⁷ Michael Caldara et al., "A Study of the Triggers of Conflict and Emotional Reactions," MDPI, 1, accessed November 19, 2020, <https://www.mdpi.com/2073-4336/8/2/21/htm>.

in the congregation. Also, we find that the frequency and intensity of conflict decrease positive emotions and increase negative emotions and that conflict impacts negative emotions more than positive emotions.⁵⁸ Some pastors are learning as we go, we need pastors to go and teach and train other pastors in the hope that we can get a handle on the cycle of sin and judgment. We find that the frequency and intensity of conflict decrease positive emotions and increase negative emotions.

Finally, we find that conflict impacts negative emotions more than positive emotions.⁵⁹ Approaches and methods will consist of using a workshop to educate individuals on the need to be self-aware and working through the traumatic experiences in life in order to live healthy lives. Support group and more collaborations with other mental health professionals are needed in the church environment. Current theological understandings indicate the creation of implicit memory of highly charged emotions and bodily sensations experienced during events experienced as traumatic.⁶⁰

My hypothesis is if we can provide self-awareness practices then we can become more aware of the need to work toward healthy behavior. For years, my coping mechanism for dealing with my pain was through anger. Throughout my life, I experienced a myriad of traumatic events that went on unaddressed or acknowledged. These oppressive experiences in my life created unknown triggers, triggers that would be set off based on an experience that was unconsciously familiar. These triggers led to my unhealthy behavior which resulted in creating a negative space and negatively impacting

⁵⁸ Caldara et al., "A Study of the Triggers of Conflict," 1.

⁵⁹ Caldara et al., "A Study of the Triggers of Conflict," 1.

⁶⁰ Jane Simington, *A Soulful Approach to Disassociation Resulting from Trauma* (Sheffield, UK: Equinox Publishing, Ltd, 2018), 118.

my present community. The church is presently going through the same experience. Negative behavior is constantly being exhibited due to the traumatic experiences in the lives of the church and individuals within the church. The danger is knowing that the church and the individuals within the church are completely unaware of the motivation of our behavior.

My hypothesis and theoretical theory aid in bringing everything into sharper focus. There is a dire need to help clergy and other faith leaders to become more aware of self in order to prevent themselves from getting caught into the web of projection. Projection put on by other members struggling with unmet or unaddressed traumatic events in their own lives. Imagine if in marriages, both persons were able to recognize, in the moment, what was informing their negative behavior and the triggers. Does everyone know what causes them to act the way that they do in the moment that their trigger is initiated? It becomes simple to take things personally when individuals begin acting out and we are confronted with the unexpected. Especially, when as a leader your goal is to show or prove that you can lead, and no one will prevent that from happening at all costs. Faith communities have several options for coordinating with mental health providers to deliver care for people who have experienced maltreatment. Most options fall into either a more community-oriented approach or a more individual-oriented approach. The church provided the best care and nurturing of her members when she pursues both avenues.⁶¹

⁶¹ Pete Singer, "Coordinating Pastoral Care of Survivors with Mental Health Providers," *Currents in Theology and Missions* 45, no. 3 (2018): 32.

The particular area of struggle may be outside the pastor's areas of competence or may involve both a spiritual and clearly psychiatric component.⁶² Knowing ways to collaborate, understanding factors that increase the urgency of collaboration, and having a concrete plan all provide a pastor with the necessary tools to coordinate pastoral care of survivors with mental health providers.⁶³ This collaboration will require the need of reassuring the clergy that no one is trying to take their job, shame them and or make them out as the enemy. Pastors will have to feel as if they are being respected.

Traumatic life events impact, the body, self-structure, and should of the survivor. Accordingly, the authors submit that overwhelmingly traumatic events adversely affect not only the "psychological dimensions of the self but also the faith systems and spiritually which give meaning to one's life."⁶⁴ Psychological trauma caused by natural disasters, accidental disasters of human origin and violence often leaves the spiritual domain in disarray.⁶⁵ Since various and belief systems can facilitate recovery from significance psychological trauma and PTSD, the authors encourage those who respond to victims of trauma to develop a holistic model of treatment designed to revitalize, transform, and heal their own.⁶⁶ As a result, the question becomes why are these authors sharing their intel. Why has the mental health community not made stronger effort to stress the need for more involved in mental health? Data supplied by the empirical

⁶² Singer, "Coordinating Pastoral Care of Survivors," 33.

⁶³ Singer, "Coordinating Pastoral Care of Survivors," 35.

⁶⁴ John P. Wilson and Thomas A. Moran, "Psychological Trauma: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Spirituality, Rosemead School of Psychology Biola University, 0091-6471/410-730," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 26, no. 2 (1998): 168.

⁶⁵ Wilson and Moran, "Psychological Trauma," 168.

⁶⁶ Wilson and Moran, "Psychological Trauma," 168.

sciences of psychiatry and psychology as well as an impressive body of scientific literature indicate that extreme trauma can devastate the psyche and leave the human personality in ruin. Religious faith and spirituality are integral aspects of personality and essential components of one's identity.⁶⁷

Consequently, faith is inseparable from personality. Initially, self-awareness is accompanied by a sense of promise. As one becomes conscious of existence in the world of being, life promises to be magnificent, rewarding and fulfilling.⁶⁸ Consequently, it is imperative that mental health practitioners, clergy, and other spiritual ministers duly consider the impact of psychological trauma and PTSD on human faith and spirituality.⁶⁹ Some traumatic events are extreme, unexpected, and outside the range of usual human experience.⁷⁰ Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is best understood as a physiological reaction to having been in severe life peril; it is as though the body physiology becomes stuck in a permanent fight or flight alert.⁷¹ Given the mercurial moods and inability to trust, the PTSD sufferer struggles with relationships. One therapist called "best by dark emotions and afraid to love." Conditions that impair a person's capacity to love and be loved are of major concern to those of us who profess a God of love.⁷²

This current dilemma is one of the reasons that some Veteran Affairs (VA) staff are recruiting churches to help vets, as their research shows that many vets tend to turn to

⁶⁷ Wilson and Moran, "Psychological Trauma," 168.

⁶⁸ Wilson and Moran, "Psychological Trauma," 170.

⁶⁹ Wilson and Moran, "Psychological Trauma," 170.

⁷⁰ Wilson and Moran, "Psychological Trauma," 171.

⁷¹ Amy Blumenshine, "The Suffering of Veterans," *War* 34, no. 4 (Fall 2014): 380.

⁷² Blumenshine, "The Suffering of Veterans," 380.

pastors before therapists.⁷³ Moral injury is a term that has gained traction since 2009 when group VA psychologist published a review of research about what troubles vets. They found that moral transgressions - violating internal, often unconscious, codes of human behavior - led to increased utilization of VA medical services of all kinds, physiological as well as psychological.⁷⁴

Moral casualty, fictive killing is but one of the many ways our modern culture numbs us to the significance of life, blocking our reverence, and teaching lies about killing.⁷⁵ After examining and researching the discipline and the framework of trauma theory, the theory provides great insight as to how traumatic experiences impact others' behavior in a negative way. The reality is that the negative behavior that is exhibited can traumatize others. There is a major need for clergy to partner more with the mental health community more than ever. As a community of faith, we can no longer stand idly by and continue to watch churches and families be destroyed by the lack of self-awareness.

New insights have come with choosing this theory and that is historical trauma. Trauma theory should be molded under this thought since trauma is based upon horrific events happening in the lives of individuals. As a theory, historical trauma is the cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across

⁷³ Blumenshine, "The Suffering of Veterans," 381.

⁷⁴ Brett T. Litz et al., "Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans: A Preliminary Model and Intervention Strategy," *Clinical Psychology Review* 29 (2009): 695-706.

⁷⁵ Blumenshine, "The Suffering of Veterans," 383.

generations, emanating from massive group trauma experiences.⁷⁶ The key difference is that it focuses on a massive group versus an individual. It is the oppressive history, fraught with dehumanization, racial injustice, and the systematic alienation of (enslaved and freed) Africans by European-Americans, socially constructed to foster an ideology of white racial superiority.⁷⁷ In all, African American families are struggling to survive due to compounded experiences of race-class discrimination resulting in chronic stress, of which most individuals may not even be aware they are suffering from.⁷⁸

“Cultural trauma refers to a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric affecting a group of people that have achieved some degree of cohesion.”⁷⁹ The reality of societal oppression and its physiological impact on the psyche of African Americans as a whole is irrefutable. William E. Cross argues racism is the origin of the trauma that has resulted in the contemporary social conditions the plague African Americans.⁸⁰ While some scholars may suggest that developing a rationale that identifies historical oppression as casual American depression may support a pathological view of African Americans, I contend that the American trans-Atlantic slave trade establishes an undeniable link between systemic oppression and depression among African Americans. The trauma of slavery has done more than create a kind of sentimental victimization; it is the enduring legacy that perpetuates current socioeconomic conditions for African

⁷⁶ Wynneta Wimberly, “The Culture of Stigma Surrounding Depression in the African American Family and Community,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 25, no. 1 (2015): 24. DOI10.1179/1064986715Z.0000000004.

⁷⁷ Wimberly, “The Culture of Stigma Surrounding Depression,” 19.

⁷⁸ Wimberly, “The Culture of Stigma Surrounding Depression,” 22.

⁷⁹ Wimberly, “The Culture of Stigma Surrounding Depression,” 23.

⁸⁰ Wimberly, “The Culture of Stigma Surrounding Depression,” 21.

Americans.⁸¹ Transgenerational Trauma is the unresolved trauma passed from one generation to the next, the effects of which are also passed on when left unresolved.⁸²

In conclusion, traumatic events play a major role in the behavior of humankind, especially unaddressed trauma. When an individual has experienced a trauma and has sought not to deal with the ramifications of that trauma it could result in negative behavior rising to the surface unaware. The church has gone long enough not clear on her behavior and negative impact on others. Many members have gone extended periods of time with pain and not being aware of how it has influenced their behavior. The church and the individuals in the church have all been traumatized and yet we are walking around as though nothing has ever happened. As the church, we have not recognized that we have been wounded and to what extent of our pain and wounds.

This project is heavily connected to the trauma theory because it can lead us to find effective ways of dealing with the pain in our lives and exploring and defining why people behave the way that they do. Many people behave the way that they do due to historical, acute, chronic, and complex trauma. This project will help determine how effective safe vulnerable spaces will be in providing self-awareness practices. Historically, we discovered that Saul was completely unaware of his negative behavior demonstrated towards Christian which is why God asked him about his reasoning for persecution. Saul was clueless about the traumatic events of his life informing his negative behavior. Historical trauma is a great theory to explain why oppressive behavior persists in the Baptist church. Complex trauma is constantly complicating and stunting

⁸¹ Wimberly, "The Culture of Stigma Surrounding Depression," 21.

⁸² M. Doucet, "Generational Trauma, Attachment, and Spiritual Religious Interventions," *Journal of Loss and Trauma* 15 (2010): 95-96.

the growth of the church, unconsciously. Womanist theology teaches us to be forgiving and inclusive in our practices and attempts to be relational. Healing can be achieved; healthy behavior and self-awareness can be embraced and experienced. These foundational ideas, historical, biblical, theological and theoretical prove itself to be helpful in the quest to become more aware of self and developing strategies to work toward healthy behavior. More clarity will come when the project is conducted. The project will consist of a two-day workshop that will focus on self-awareness, the urgency of understanding self-awareness and self-awareness practices.

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

Healing is not impossible for the church. Becoming self-aware of the traumatic experiences in our lives and how they inform negative behavior is a step toward freedom. Exploring biblical connections, Saul and I have a lot in common. For so long I have lived my life unaware of the hurt and pain in my own life. I have operated in ways that has become oppressive in one way or another. Saul was oppressive. He set out to persecute and kill Christians all for the glory of himself. He was determined to satisfy the lust of flesh and pain so that he could satisfy something within that could never be embraced until he recognized and identified the hurt.

Historically, we can see how the lack of self-awareness can bring about an onslaught of unhealthy behavior among those that experience oppressor like attitude and practice. According to actor Carl Jung on the television series “Criminal Minds,” he stated, “The healthy man does not torture others. Generally, it is the tortured who turn into torturers.” The aim of the research was to explore the history of oppression and how it has caused a flood of unhealthy behavior to be exhibited in the history of the Baptist church. The lack of self-awareness proved to be the pathway that oppression has traveled through the course of the centuries. The objectives were to show how oppression existed in the life of the Baptist church, examine the history of the black church and seek out

examples of unhealthy behavior, and finally to investigate how the women in the black Baptist church continues to be oppressed by the members of the congregation. The Suffrage Movement was used to compare and give clarity as to how men viewed women in society.

Theologically, the research aimed to explore womanist theology and its connection to the need to become aware of the traumatic events that helped to shape our roles in the world. Negative behavior is believed to be the reason that drives wedge between us all. This negative behavior is only the result of some form of oppression experienced by someone in our lives that later became unaware of.

Theoretically, traumatic events play a major role in the behavior of humankind, especially unaddressed trauma. When an individual has experienced a trauma and do not deal with the ramifications of that trauma, it could result in negative behavior rising to the surface unaware. This project is heavily connected to the trauma theory because it can lead us to finding effective ways of dealing with pain and exploring and defining why people behave the way that they do. Many people behave the way that they do due to unknown historical, acute, chronic, and complex trauma. This project will help determine how effective safe vulnerable spaces will be in providing self-awareness practices.

Methodology

This project began by listening to the students from the fifth and six semesters after joining the program. The andragogical process that we experienced helped to shape the process that I was entering. As I listened, I determined that the workshop method was

the route that I was going to take for my project. No, I did not know what I was going to focus on because, at this moment, I was dedicated to presenting my spiritual autobiography, contextual analysis and synergy. It was through years of listening to my classmates that I got more clarity on how I would move forward with my project. I heard my classmates discuss how they viewed the successes and failures. I also took notes on what I wanted to see and do for my future project. I am reminded that the book about adult learning played a major part in the process for all the students at United Theological Seminary. Since the beginning of this program, I have listened to fifth and six semester students share their stories of their project; and I was only left to dream and imagine what it would be like when I started my project.

There were two instances that I experienced that opened my eyes to the negative behavior that I was displaying throughout years. My wife told me that I needed therapy. I fought against that thinking that I was truly okay. In reflection, I knew I needed to talk to someone; but I thought it was something that could wait. I was always concerned about money and the cost to get the emotional support I needed. There were two instances that caused me to recognize that I had a problem. Unlike my initial thinking when I began at United.

The first instance was during a learning session I attended, there was an older black male who represented the military. He was discussing military chaplaincy and shared information about the program. I asked a question and sought some wisdom. He could not answer the question, so he gave some answer that felt dismissive and unclear. My feelings of anger after he left was fierce and relentless. In the moment, I could not

express how I felt. It seemed more like the prodigal son when he approached his father and asked him for all that belonged to him so that he could leave.

The second incident was when I made a decision about a course of action to take and my leader, who was an older black male, disagreed. The leader told me that I was going to follow the directives given. I was filled with rage and ready to blow my top. I immediately walked out fear that I would lose myself completely. In an attempt to get a handle on the situation, I spoke with my wife. While going through counseling, I discovered I was reacting to my emotions. As I continued to go through counseling, I learned that I was reacting to trauma. Over the years I felt betrayed by older black men in ministry. I began to review my spiritual autobiography and contextual analysis and saw the connection. For years, I was exhibiting negative behavior because I was reacting to the traumatic experiences I endured over the years. In addition, these experiences were caused by religious leaders in the faith community. How many more people have gone through such experiences? How are they dealing with the after effects of the events that they went through?

I initially decided to do a workshop that included students from varying theological schools within Atlanta, Georgia. I think my initial motive for doing the project was skewed by selfish ambition versus the leading of the Holy Spirit. It was not until I got clarity that God began to show me the direction that I needed to take. I realized that the workshop should be a tool to educate people about spirituality, trauma, and self-awareness.

I struggled with the best route to take to understand where people were concerning their awareness and history of trauma. After listening to scholars and other

students seeking the doctorate, I realized that having a workshop that provides education regarding a specific subject may be the better option. Doing a Bible study and preaching a sermon series on self-awareness and trauma would not accomplish the goal of educating. I believe the challenge is that many people are clueless to the reality of the trauma that they have experienced in their lives. For many years, I thought I was fine and healed. Only to later discover, that I still had traumatic events that was influencing my behavior. A workshop would create a space where people could feel safe about exploring what drives their behavior.

After reviewing notes from classmates in the past, we were not prepared to do a project amid a global pandemic. Due to the pandemic, I had to consider doing a project that would allow participants to feel physically and emotional safe from a virtual video conferencing platform. I reached out to the director of the research department of the hospital to get permission to use the Microsoft team's platform of the hospital. Using this program under the hospital's platform would help persons feel safe while being on the video conferencing platform.

Interviews

I chose to do interviews to get an idea of what people were thinking before the workshop. Doing the interview before the workshop also allowed me to connect with people before the workshop and introduce the work that I was attempting to do.

Pre-post surveys gives an idea of where people are before the workshop. Post-surveys will give us an idea of how affective the workshop was for individual

participants. The pre-post surveys served as an assessment tool to determine how impactful the workshop can be for others.

Observers were available to help identify persons who may be triggered by the conversation as well as observe how persons responded to the presentations and conversations during the workshop. Observers were also ready to speak with individuals privately, if participants felt as if they needed to talk.

Survey Monkey was chosen for the purpose of sending out pre-post surveys. The goal was to use this well-known and recognized survey service to prevent participants from having to print, scan and email their information three times. In addition, I chose this method because it was easier to conduct and receive back.

I chose to use the qualitative approach because it provides a rich and detailed picture about why people act in certain ways and their feelings about these actions. This approach allowed me to present the data in the form of a story. The story method provides depth and detail. It looks deeper than analyzing ranks and counts by recording attitudes, feelings, and behavior. It creates openness and encourages people to expand on their responses. Further, it can open new topic areas not initially considered.

I did decide to record interviews and workshop because I knew that I was not going to catch everything in writing or just by listening. I asked everyone for their permission to record the interview and the workshop when they filled out the consent paperwork. I verbally shared and reminded them that once everything was completed, I would destroy the recording and all paperwork associating them with the workshop and this project.

In considering a timeline, in the midst of a global pandemic, the workshop would have been planned for one day and a half. However, due to COVID, I had to come up with a time that would allow people to be fully engaged and not worry about how much time it would take for them to do the workshop. I moved the time to four hours on the video conferencing platform.

In preparation for this project, I planned a year early I booked a room at my hospital training center only to later get moved out due to a special training. This room was perfect because it gave space for us to train and have observers present and if one needed private space, they would be able to go to another space in the room to talk with one of the therapist. After getting moved, I found a space at the hospital that I could use. These spaces were cost effective. Additionally, I wanted to include and educate the healthcare community into my process so that they could see the work I put in to earn a doctoral degree in ministry. When COVID reared its ugly head, the hospital closed all spaces for all educational events. Thus, forcing us to the video conferencing platform.

Presenters

I was selective about the presenters. I chose to use a professional therapist to present because I wanted to show how black ministers can partner with the mental health community to deal with mental health concerns. It was also important for people to witness the interaction between the two. I selected a chaplain to talk about spiritual health care for the purpose of having a professional chaplain who has been in chaplaincy for an extended period time, other than myself.

I planned a scavenger hunt to connect and create an opportunity to share and discuss how persons dealing with their thoughts and feelings concerning the topics lifted during the workshop. The scavenger hunt also created a space where people could have fun while dealing with such difficult themes.

When I began the program at United, I knew that I was going to focus on the hurt that takes place in preachers when it comes to candidating and how churches are hurt from pastors before. It appeared as a cycle of genuine love and pain. After research, I discovered that it truly was a cycle because pain has always existed in the black church; and it will continue until we address the lack of knowledge and awareness of the pain. As a result, I was focusing on getting an audience of healthcare workers that were lay leaders and clergy.

A power point presentation for the workshop provided the participants something else to view beyond one another. I wanted to keep participants focused on the presenter and presentation without them wondering what everyone else was doing or how they felt. My goal was to keep participants engaged in a way that would cause them to be reflective.

Although I had the presenters, I chose not to be a specific presenter because I thought my focus needed to be making sure things were going smoothly. I opened the workshop up and focused on setting the pace for the workshop and the setting for learning. I began with a prayer and focused on why we were gathering on this platform. I explained the house rules so that people would know how to govern themselves. I allowed others to introduce themselves and shared expectations for the workshop. I also reminded them of the consent and my commitment to keep their information safe and

private. One goal was to also help persons feel safe to learn and share. I took some time to do a few spiritual moments to keep everyone focused on the spirituality of the experience.

There was a focus on Dr. Jacquelyn Grant and Dr. Samuel DeWitt Proctor as influencers of my position related to my project. I shared a saying or writing that led us to a period of reflection and silence. In hopes to move persons to take into the consideration of these great minds of Christian thought and theology.

Two breaks were planned for the workshop to avoid persons feeling as if they could not focus on what was being shared. Participants were encouraged to turn their videos off if they felt the need to go to the restroom or take care of a family matter. I wanted to make this fun, educational and insightful without feeling pressured in a negative way.

I began the workshop with an icebreaker. The purpose of using this icebreaker was to get people on the same page of learning and interest. I had everyone taking turns counting to twenty. Someone began counting and everyone must say a number if anyone says the same number at the same time, we will have to start the count over. The goal was to make it to twenty without making any mistakes.

Music helped to guide us and prepare our hearts for what was to come. As everyone was logging on, I played India Arie "Strength Courage and Wisdom." It took strength, courage, and wisdom to accept where we are in our minds and hearts. Midway, I played Marvin Gaye because often we have feelings and are unclear why we feel or do what we do. We look for answers and reasons but remain unclear why we feel a certain way and what to do with our feelings. I closed with Tamela Mann "Change." This song

suggests that we be open to change and God being a part of the change that overcomes us.

During the introduction, I discussed why we gathered. Information was provided as it relates to how the IRB is governing us during this workshop for the purpose of keeping them safe while simultaneously holding us accountable for securing persons privacy. Information was provided on how United has guided to this place in the program. I shared the purpose of each chapter, spiritual autobiography, contextual analysis and synergy. Based on what came from our synergy, we chose a passage of scripture that would speak to the problem that came from the contextual analysis and spiritual autobiography. After selecting the passage, we found a historical time or piece that spoke to the issues. The theological framework could be connected to the problem as well as theoretical framework that shows how our issues are played out in the church. All of these themes leading to a connected project with the hope of bringing healing, revelation, and clarity to the challenges of life. With this guide and the accountability of the IRB, I was able to move forward with the implementation of my project.

Implementation

The implementation of my project was fun, exciting, tense and interesting. My IRB approval and COVID significantly changed the trajectory of my project. Due to the IRB application not being approved in time, I had to change the date for my project. COVID also had an impact on when and where my project would take place. Due to persons not feeling comfortable with coming together I had to conduct my project by way of video conferencing. In addition, due to churches being limited in their meeting, it

became difficult to find persons willing to participate in my project. At the last minute, I had to reach out to some of my social media groups and ask them to participate.

Another challenge was finding a good day and time for the project to take place. I initially struggled with getting the same people that expressed interest in participating. I had to call around for a therapist that was willing to be an observer. I connected with my leader at the hospital to see if I could use Microsoft Teams through the hospital. The IRB department head gave approval to using Microsoft Teams for the project. I connected with the senior administrative secretary of the hospital and asked her to set the meeting up. After the date and Teams app set up, I was able to lock in the presenters and observers.

I went back and forth with one presenter because of scheduling conflicts. Since I really wanted this presenter to be present, I changed the initial set up of the agenda. I found a therapist that was able to do the project even though she was going to be out of town with her family. At this time, I needed to lock in participants that would definitely want to participate. My Groupme App was used to seek assistance from the community. Members were asked to help me out with project for school by being participants in my workshop related to self-awareness and trauma. Potential participants were informed that it would not be in person, but it would be on a video conferencing platform. Due to slow responses, I made a few calls to coworkers and friends to see if they were able to help me out. A few of my friends agreed to participate.

While waiting for my IRB to be approved, I focused on making sure my consent paperwork was completed and ready to be sent out. Initially, fourteen participants agreed and all necessary information was collected to include names, phone numbers and email

addresses to ensure information was submitted in a timely manner. I sent out consent paperwork and explanation of my project, standard operating procedures of IRB. During this part of the project, I immediately began wishing I did this differently.

Throughout this entire time, I am communicating with my mentors and professional associates. Seeking their wisdom and guidance. They all kept me encouraged and gave helpful advice to move forward successfully. Interviews were scheduled for each person. Out of the fourteen people, there were two people that I did not get an opportunity to interview due to lack of response. They were excluded from the project all together. Everyone was instructed to print, sign, scan, and email consent paperwork before the workshop. Everyone else received a confirmation phone call for the interview and recorded with their permission. Initially, the pre and post surveys were to be sent by email. However, in an attempt to effectively manage the process, I chose to do the survey by Survey Monkey.

The survey began with twelve questions, but to use the program for free I had to shorten the survey to ten question. I had both surveys sent out to the emails of the participants. The pre-survey was schedule to be sent out Saturday, July 18, 2020 at 8:00 a.m. before the workshop. The post-survey was scheduled to be sent out Saturday, July 18, 2020 at 12:00 p.m., close to the end of the workshop.

I remained in close communication with the participants, observers, and the presenters. The presenters were contacted to get their power point presentations so that I could prepare the laptop to up load and share the presentations during the workshop. Both presenters sent their presentations for uploading. Observers were confirmed for the workshop and confirmed what their purpose was for the workshop which was to observe,

talk to individuals that needed support and identify anyone in distress. For the participants, I sent the initiation to Microsoft Teams, told them what the email would look like and invited them to get the Microsoft Teams App so that they could access the app. They were also informed about the pre and post-surveys in their emails to complete before we began the workshop.

Right before the workshop, I was contacted my hospital about a request. I realized that they did not see the email asking them to hold all calls until one o'clock. I put my phone on silent and had India Arie playing as people were coming on. At this point I realized that everyone did not see their email with the instructions to download the app. People began to come on one at time. I asked for the participants to give a few more minutes than scheduled so that people could get on the call. During this time people were asking to be let in the group.

I later learned during the meeting that some of the emails I sent to the participants went to their spam accounts. During the time that we were gathering in the meeting a few people were using their phones, laptop, and tablets. Individuals were trying to determine which method was better. I honestly could not answer the question because I was successful using all of the methods. I also found out that some people were not using the app which was why they had a hard time accessing the conference.

Technology

Throughout the workshop there were people having trouble staying connected due to individual's personal devices. One observer had trouble because she accidentally knocked out her internet the night before. Some people had to finally download the app

and was able to reconnect. During the workshop, I explained the importance of everyone leaving their video on so that the observers will be able to watch the participants. One observer was trying to view all the participants but had limited view. The second observer had difficulty staying connected to the conference. I had to step away during the first presentation because I was trying to help the first observer to view all of the participants. The third observer/presenter also had trouble watching everyone. During the presentation people continued to fall in and out of connection so I had to continue to monitor persons in the lobby waiting to get admitted. I also forgot to hit the record button due to focusing on trying to help the observer figure out why she could not see everyone. In addition, while trying to help the observer, I missed the opportunity to upload or share the PowerPoint presentation of the first presenter. I also missed a great portion of the presentation. Everyone did have their screens on mute and were visible. The second presentation was managed better because of the scheduled break. The chat option was used to give a list of books that were mentioned.

At the end of the workshop, I invited observers to share their thoughts. Only one observer was able to share. One observer/presenter had to leave, and the second designated observer was cut off due to internet connection.

What I did not anticipate was the moment of silence at the beginning of the workshop. The day before both C. T. Vivian and Congressman John Robert Lewis died on the same day. What a difficult time it was to lose such great historical giants in the life of our history. The morning prayer was for us to share in this time as well as thanksgiving for having such great men in our lives and making such a difference in America and against injustice.

During the fifteen break, I asked everyone to get a snack refresh themselves and make whatever phone calls they needed before we returned for learning. Music played during the break to provide the atmosphere for sharing and it also assisted with individuals settling in for the next segment of the workshop.

I set the workshop to go from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. I was going for letting people out early so that they would not be concerned about time and be willing to complete the surveys available to them by email. The email also included agendas and biographies of the presenters and the observers. I wanted to give the participants an idea of who was presenting and serving them for the day.

Presenters

The first presenter began the presentation by sharing the connection between him and the facilitator. He shared his story as a chaplain and the book that came from his work; and how his spirituality was realized for himself. He shared a great deal about his own spiritual walk and where he is currently. Unfortunately, I was unable to show his PowerPoint presentation due to being pulled away for the purpose of assisting the observers with technical difficulties. Both presenters participated in the ice breaker at the beginning of the workshop.

Following the first presentation, a few people asked questions and he responded with transparency. Information was focused on the spiritual journey and the lesson learned. He directed the participants to the question - where is God? He modeled how to explore your own story from early childhood, to adolescents and to adulthood. We examined healing, forgiveness and what makes effective ministry. Finally, the presenter

closed the session by informing the participants on ways to write your own story and sharing it in a safe way.

The second presenter began to share her presentation on trauma and self-awareness. In preparation for the workshop this was the portion of the workshop that I was worried about the most. Many people turned their videos off during the presentation. The platform had seemed to settle. Everyone was on and no one was waiting to get in on the platform. It was quite except for the presenter. It was as if the chaos was happening in the beginning of the workshop. The recording was still on and everyone appeared to be engaged by the presentation. Our second presenter took time to define trauma and self-awareness. She discussed types of trauma and common reactions to trauma. She informed us of how trauma shows up in our lives.

Summary of Learning

In reflection, there were many things that I learned individually as well as with the group. The most important was vulnerability cannot be controlled, protected, or prevented. Due to trauma, we make attempts to protect our vulnerability. This workshop has taught me the value of being aware of vulnerability versus making attempts to protect my vulnerability. Protecting or controlling my vulnerability keeps me from dealing and addressing my true feelings and experience. Doing this workshop comes after recognizing that I have been unaware. Also, it became obvious that I have been living with trauma for decades without understanding how it was impacting my behavior with others.

I also learned that many of us can be living with a traumatic experience and not have any knowledge of its influence. This workshop not only created a space for education of self-awareness, trauma, and spiritual health, it proved that a vulnerable space can be created with people who trust. Trust can indeed be found in the house of God. People find hope and are willing to listen when there is someone with credibility and proven success. During the workshop, I did not see people lose hope or faith in the topics discussed. God was active and seen throughout the workshop. My experience in the African American church has consisted of lack of faith and trust in mental health. Multiple pastors have stated in their sermon that we need to pray and not give weight to the plights of mental health. Participants experienced the move of God throughout the workshop based on feedback received from several of the participants.

What Did We Learn?

Together we learned several ideas and facts. Trauma cannot be normalized, and neither is it experienced by everyone. Throughout the interviews everyone shared that they believed everyone experienced some level of trauma in their lives. Another lesson is that everyone will not tell you what you want to hear and everything that you hear you will not like. During the workshop, the participants stated that the presenter (spiritual care) made some statements that they did not agree or like.

One of the statements made by the presenter was that, “he did not feel the need to attend church regularly.” A few of the participants felt as if the presenter lost all credibility because they did not agree with this statement. One participant enjoyed the presentation until he heard the one statement relating to not attending church. This

participant felt as if this statement was related to the topic and should not have been included. We also learned that everyone would have their own working definition of spiritual care and spirituality. When discussing spiritual care, we must have a working definition that everyone can understand or agree with. This group expressed that they believed that there were spectrums of both trauma and spirituality. Each participant also expressed their knowledge and value of trauma, self-awareness, and spiritual care.

Summary

Throughout the course of this project I used qualitative analysis. I attained data by using interviews, observations and pre and post surveys. During the workshop, there were a few barriers that made the data collection inconsistent by way of observation. First, I planned for three observers. Unfortunately, due to technical difficulty only two were able to be fully present during the workshop. The second technical barrier was the observers were having a problematic time with seeing everyone at once on the screen. Finally, the everyone did not allow themselves to be seen throughout the workshop. One was sitting in his living room where one could not completely or consistently see his face. Some turned off the video at various intervals. However, based upon what they did see they did not see anything that required one to be placed in a breakout room to be checked upon. There was only one person that appeared to be triggered per the observers. One participant looked triggered when the first presenter responded to her question. In an interview with that participant, she responded that she felt attacked and was offended by the presenter's response to her question.

Another observation was during the first presentation, majority of everyone had their video turned on and during the second presentation majority of the presentations were turned off. I am not clear why it turned out that way, I realized the difference while reviewing the recording. The participants were a makeup of clergy, pastors, healthcare workers and a schoolteacher. The age range consisted of age thirty-five to seventy-six years old. There were four men and five women who made up the workshop.

The second method I used for the workshop was interviews. I did an initial interview and a post-interview. All the participants agreed that they valued self-awareness and were consciously working to increase their awareness for the purpose of personal growth. The participants had varying responses to the question of defining spiritual care. Some viewed spiritual care as something that a clergy person would provide; and others described it as something that one would be responsible for doing for oneself. Many agreed that they believe that trauma has impacted members of the church. All of the participants believe that everyone experience some level of trauma in their lives.

When preparing for doing this project the initial plan was to do this workshop in person. Due to COVID-19 plans were changed to help persons feel safe about participating. As a result of COVID-19, I had to adjust and do everything electronically. Going in this direction in such a short period created some areas of inconsistency. One area of inconsistency existed within the responses to the workshop. It appears as if the participants responded favorably to the trauma and self-awareness portion than the spiritual care. As a clergy member, I just knew that the clergy would have jumped on this topic and shared from their own experiences. All except one disengaged and said

nothing. The one person that did respond, expounded on how her church has worked to take a more holistic approach to do ministry to aid persons in spiritual growth. Some participants shared how they would love to hear more about her program at another time because they thought it would aid their ministry. Outside of her sharing, there was not much response to the topic.

When we did the topic on self-awareness and trauma there was a greater hunger for knowledge. The energy of the workshop picked up and after the second presentation persons began to ask a plethora of questions and comments. Many shared how they wished she could have continued to share. They felt that she was more connected to the audience and this kind of topic. Persons felt free to engage the presenter concerning their own personal and spiritual matters. The response was surprising. I briefly considered going into mental health. I do believe that the energy expanded because many of the person in the workshop felt a greater need to have this concern addressed in the church.

In the data collection both pre and post-surveys had ten questions. However, nine people completed the pre-survey but six persons completed the post-survey. I attribute the lack of response to one, not being in person and the other time and technological experience. One persons had trouble pulling up the survey and chose not to deal with the survey at all.

Comparisons

Question One: I act out in negative ways when people say things that hurt my feelings? In the pre-survey many agreed that they act out in negative ways when people said things that hurt their feelings. The post-survey later revealed that there was a

decrease in the responses for acting out and more acknowledged that they did not. I could not help but to wonder how they understood or interpreted the question.

Question Two: I read my Bible to avoid saying the wrong thing to people when I am angry at them? I did not understand everyone's response, what made the responses change significantly. The pre-survey revealed that many did not read their Bibles to avoid saying the wrong thing to people when they were angry. After the workshop the post-survey showed that many did read their Bibles.

Question Three: My childhood experiences can still impact me today? This answer was interesting and confusing. In the third question there was no change in either survey, the answer remained the same in both.

Question Four: What are some common elements related to trauma? In the pre-survey more agreed that the common element related to trauma was that it was unexpected. Everyone agreed that we are not prepared to deal with the trauma. After the workshop, many changed their decision and agreed that the common elements related to trauma consist of, it is unexpected, not prepared to deal with the trauma and I could nothing to stop my behavior.

Question Five: Trauma is a natural stress response from an event, series of events or certain circumstances that make you feel in fear of harm? Survey results took a big turn after the workshop. The post-survey results went to 100%. People appeared to be clearer concerning the definition and results of trauma.

Question Six: Trauma has everything to do with my ability to control my temper and other irrational actions? The post-survey results appeared to have increased after the workshop. Many people did see how trauma impacted their control over anger.

Question Seven: My level of faith determines how I heal from grief, sickness, mental health, or anything that is weighing me down? Many did not agree until after the workshop. Although some expressed a disconnect during the spirituality portion of the workshop, they still were able to see how faith plays in life concerning grief, sickness and mental health.

Questions Eight: How much am I willing to work to improve my overall spiritual, physical, and mental health?. Initially, in the pre-survey everyone was not as willing to work to improve their overall spiritual, mental and spiritual health. As a result of the workshop, everyone agreed that this was something worth doing.

Question Nine: When I get angry the best way, I know to handle it is...? Based on the pre and post-surveys, there was no change in two of the responses. Three of the answers, the numbers decreased. The number one response and increase was, “I will wait a few days to think about what I might do.” The second most popular answers were, “tell that person how angry I am right then” and “Something else.”

Question Ten: Trauma can impact my...? _After reviewing the pre and post-surveys, it appears as though there was a decrease in all of the responses and an increase in the number of people who believed that this could impact one more mentally. Per the results, mental, physical and relationships are believed to be the most impacted based on the results.

In retrospect, there was a significant response to the concerns related to trauma and self-awareness compared to that of spiritual care. The results from the workshop has made me question if I should have had more than one person to share on spirituality since there are so many views and spectrums of understanding concerning the matter. This

project has also made me curious to how many clergy and laypersons in the church are willing to introduce and excel a greater understanding or implementation of mental health programs or ministries in the church. It is clear to me that this workshop has helped and taught others about trauma, spiritual care and self-awareness.

In comparing my hypothesis to the actual research conducted, there are several take-aways to glean from. I have found that the work accomplished in this workshop has supported my hypothesis. Each person expressed a desire to work toward healthy behavior. The problem has existed long enough. The lack of self-awareness has led us to negative and unhealthy behavior of self and others in the church, school, community and households. My purpose in doing this workshop was to communally explore and become conscious of the behavior impacted by traumatic experiences in vulnerable spaces.

Although virtually, this space with this small number of people created a sacred time for others to hear and learn about spiritual care, self-awareness, and trauma. As a result, they all left with more insight concerning the three themes. Based on the interviews, it told the story of where people were and how they felt about themselves concerning spirituality, self-awareness and trauma. Observation demonstrated that participants were more into the self-awareness and trauma. Another word that came up multiple times was mindfulness and paths to mindfulness. This workshop has proven that mental health is a necessary and vital component that needs to be explored within the life of the church.

The pre and post-surveys demonstrated that trauma is a topic that needs more exploration and understanding among the body of Christ. One participant expressed the desire and willingness to stay on longer for more conversation and explanation. The

participant was moved to share how impactful this workshop was for herself and how helpful it could be for others. The participant also verbalized the need to share or provide this training for pastors as a group in hope that it would empower them to direct their members to resources that would aid them to become mentally, spiritually and emotionally healthy. There is a great part of me that believes that majority of the participants were moved in such a way because they have experienced some level of trauma in their own lives and have found some comfort in sharing with others who were once traumatized.

Conclusion

My spiritual autobiography allowed me to reflect and explore the exiting and difficult events in my life that has helped to shape and mold who I am now. This academic exercise forced me to confront the periods of adversity that I thought I had a handle on. This research also propelled me into a spirit of courage where I am now willing to face and embrace the hardships as I do the joyous times in my life. While combing through the initial work, it became a battle with what to address during this program. Deciding on which issue was more important than another. Wisdom now says that it is not about which was more important, it was about which one the Lord prepared me to encounter. Our lives are filled with so many areas of unrest; however, in God's time we will confront the ones that are necessary for the work assigned to our hands and purpose. The beauty of going through this process is being able to see our own life story in the history and bloodline of our own context.

The contextual analysis aided me in looking at what we were doing critically. This research challenged me to explore why we perform or behave the way that we do and not be satisfied with the answer we have always done it this way. The contextual analysis provoked my curiosity in our behavior as Baptist members. I realized as Saul thought what he was doing was right. As faith leaders, we operate the same way, we think that what we are doing is right. However, often it has no merit and it ultimately ends up being about self and personal agendas. In many cases, we have hurt one another not realizing what kind of pain we have caused others. Having the opportunity to compare my spiritual autobiography and contextual analysis became both amazing and undeniable in its relation to one another.

My synergy chapter was difficult in determining what the main issue was going to be for my project. I was struggling with the themes of shame, rejection, and forgiveness. It was not until I became aware of my own negative behavior that I realized self-awareness was a major theme that needed to be address. In going through my contextual analysis, I realized that the lack of self-awareness may be why many churches are leaving the convention and Baptist associations. Some Baptist organizations are unaware of the behavior exhibited by leaders and or internal cliques that negatively influence other's decisions and resignations. Like that of Saul, he was exhibiting negative behavior but was under the impression that he was doing what was right. Saul was completely unaware of the hatred he had in his heart for others.

Biblically, the exploration of Saul's negative behavior. His behavior led to the and death of Christians. Saul was convicted by his own hurt and pain to destroy the lives of others. It took a supernatural experience to his attention. At some level he knows he

was wrong based on his immediate response and obedience to God's commands. It was also his willingness and openness to help that he was able to regain his physical and spiritual sight. Paul sought to conquer and keep Christians down and so did America as men sought to devalue the life of women, likewise the black church and their behavior to black women in leadership and ministry.

Historically, I was led to examine women's movement and their involvement in the black church. I cannot speak on behalf of women and neither can I speak as a woman. However, the women's experience helped me to understand how someone has experienced pain would foster and react abusively with unhealthy behavior. The women's movement has been filled with men keeping women at a lower status. As black Baptist we have been kept in our place during slavery by some white Baptist as they refused to let blacks hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Not understanding its full impact as black men, we have inherited and embraced the unhealthy behavior of disempowering our women as we were by white Baptist.

Theologically, I have been moved by black, liberation and womanist theology. While I was drawn to black and liberation theologies, I primarily identified with womanist theology. For the longest time, I detested the topics that focused upon womanist and feminist theology mainly because of how I experienced some women in seminary. They appeared to hide behind womanist theology and use it as a place to throw rocks and hide their hands. I can openly admit that I was young and inexperienced in these conversations of thought. I was not well versed with life experiences that handed down oppression as a gift.

After further research, I concluded that black women have experienced so much and have been oppressed by so many people including black men, they only seek to protect themselves at all cost. Some women are on the defense by swinging at all that appears dangerous and vicious. Taking strikes at those things that appear uncomfortably familiar. I have become drawn and engaged with the tenets of womanist theology because they are familiar to me. I have been motivated by my trauma for so long I never recognized the behavior that came along with the hurt. I was only focused on protecting myself. In reflection, I believe some women have done or are doing the same they are unaware of their own hurt that came with oppressive people that anyone that reminds them or acts like the person that was oppressive to them they go into defense mode unconsciously. Womanist theology also played a role in teaching me how to forgive and accepting the reality of oppressive behavior by others. Having to constantly deal with oppression can impact one's mental and spiritual health.

Theoretically, I embraced the value and the necessity for mental health in the black church. The myths and untold truths concerning mental health have plagued the church's mindset and understanding of the need, benefit, and beauty of this discipline. If we paid more attention to this need in the black church, we may be considered as being more relevant in this present time. This is especially true due to the rejection, shame, trauma, and grief experienced by congregants. I have witnessed, heard, and read about the traumatic stories endured by others. As a result, we as the black church should consider responding differently.

The black church has experienced a significant amount of trauma in and outside of the church. If the black church remains silent and stagnant concerning addressing the

mental health needs of the church people may continue to leave the church. Many people share their reasons for not going to church, death in the family, divorce, shame, trauma of watching their family member in the front of the church, loss of job, house or car, caring for loved ones at home sick and finally, visiting loved ones in jail or prison. So how do we as a church help the parishioners? There is a pressing demand for collaboration between the black church and the mental health community. Congregants are not just oppressed by individuals but by their situations and socio-economic status. The black church must act with wisdom and holistic intervention. Therefore, it is relevant to evaluate the research project and identify the various aspects of the project.

I think the project worked beautifully, not perfectly. There were so many components that I wanted to happen that did not. I wanted a longer workshop but was not sure how long I would be able to maintain everyone's attention for extended periods of time. I wanted to invite more seminary students but it was difficult identifying and contacting professors to get their involvement and finally, things began to get more complex due to COVID-19's involvement with planning and determining if persons were going to be face. Beyond all the complications, I still believe that the workshop went beautifully. All of the participants said that they enjoyed the workshop. They said that it went smoothly, they got the information they needed to be active and they wish it would have been longer. Participants also shared how the time management of the workshop was perfect and appreciated how we followed the agenda accordingly.

By conducting this research, I learned that I cannot control everything. We are constantly being challenged in our lives and we must always be open to adjusting. I have also learned to live with myself and the work I have done. For years, I have experience

traumatic circumstances and was open to sharing them. Also, I did I know how to address them or how to cope. There is value in living in vulnerability and being aware when my vulnerability comes to surface or triggered. I have now embraced the blessing and benefit of continued therapy and the lifelong work that needs to occur between mental health and the church.

Further, I discovered that not being face to face takes on a more emotional and mental toll on me. As an extrovert, I thrive off being in the physical presence of people. Doing everything online makes it complicated, everyone is not showing themselves on the video, you cannot observe full body movement and there are other conversations that are going on that you are not aware of during the training. I found myself focusing on more of how people would respond to trauma and self-awareness versus spiritual care. Instead there were more people who responded negatively to spiritual care. I am curious if they felt that they did not need information on spiritual care compared to what they needed pertaining to trauma and spiritual care. There is limited amount of research on the progression of women leadership in the black Baptist church. There is also a smaller amount of literature regarding the black church and mental health.

Doing this research has brought so many relevant ideas and concepts to the front of my mind. There are five that I look forward to exploring soon. First, I would like to do work on the comparison of spiritual awareness versus emotional and mental self-awareness. Knowledge of the two could enhance our connection or walk with God and connectivity to others and may aid in the advancement of the church without traumatizing others.

Secondly, I would like to do research on self-awareness for entire congregations varying of different sizes and socio-economic status. Congregations are so mixed; some are small but have high ranking officials attending. You also have large churches filled with middle class people and stuck with the same mindset. There are people who have arrived in different areas of their lives. I find it vital to begin involving churches in research so that truth can begin to uplift us and work to change our behavior, attitude, and mindsets.

Thirdly, this research has enlightened and pushed me to think differently. I am inspired to ask more questions of myself and of the black Baptist church. I have been moved by the research discovered and the questions that continue to go unanswered for so long. The trauma that exist within the black Baptist church is vast and found on several levels of leadership and congregational experience. I have noticed that in the past and currently some pastors are believed to constantly be concerned about their job security. As a result they limit who can come into the church to present new ideas and truths. Research on black pastors and how they see their role in the black church would be powerful research.

Fourthly, I would like to do research on the candidating process in the black Baptist church. Reflecting on my own experience I have found so many conflicting concerns related to how a pastor is selected. Some churches are led by convention leaders as was in the past. Now some churches are hiring person outside of their congregation and they are bypassing the faith piece due to the negative experiences of the former pastors. Some pastors bring their hurt to churches that have been healthy in the past. There needs to be research done on the cycle of innocence and trauma.

Finally, I would like to introduce a theology that speaks to the work that I have done through this workshop. As Saul was knock down and the Lord asked why he was persecuting God. Saul was sent to a place where he was alone left to wait on Ananias, a member from the community. Theology of Scales is a theology based upon being physically, spiritually, and emotionally blinded until we are confronted by a trinitarian experience. The trinitarian experience consist of dealing with self, God, and community. The scales are symbolic of what blinds us. Without the willingness to be open to understand or learn we cannot be impacted by the community's attempt to touch us with a hand of love, mercy, or forgiveness.

Looking back, I would do so many things differently. Due to changes within our curriculum and misunderstanding in the semester process, I fell behind and was under several time constraints. In addition, COVID-19 forced me into changing how I would conduct my workshop. I could no longer use the facilities I arranged initially. The blessing was that I did not have to pay much for doing the workshop.

The first change would be to reset my timeline. I would work to interview participants a month ahead of time. While I was interviewing them, I would have them download the Microsoft Teams Application on their phone, tablet and computer and do the interview on the Teams application so that they could familiarize themselves with the application.

Secondly, I would explain Survey Monkey and gave more specific instructions regarding filling it out and submitting before the end of the workshop. I would have taken more time to explain what I needed specifically from the presenters. I should have had a spiritual health panel instead of one person to present. I should have selected

someone to be responsible for letting people into the workshop. I could have had everyone log on thirty minutes before the workshop began to ensure everyone was on and the observers could see everyone, and everyone knew how to use the app to their advantage.

Conclusion

In conclusion, clueless of her venomous and callous chains of oppression that enslaves the individual and others in its grasps. There is a call to be free and aware of others traumatic events in their lives and to be a source of healing versus furthering the injury already experienced by others. The church has been called to help set the captives free, not reverse the call, retraumatize and enslave others with our own negative behavior and oblivious mindsets. Our churches and community have felt the burdensome hand and dictatorial practices of the church and have responded with their absence. If persons in the faith community are opened to embrace their own vulnerabilities, then they will be more likely to approach life's circumstances more optimistically. We must identify and repair what may be causing the divisions in the church and the reasoning behind the feelings of disgust of the aggressive attacks on individuals. Solving this quandary will consist of developing a viable process for individuals to seek out healing.

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